

AN ASSESSMENT OF HISPANIC CHURCHES IN THE ST. LOUIS AREA IN  
RELATION TO MARRIAGE COUNSELING AND ENRICHMENT

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis-project analyzes how Hispanic churches in St. Louis are addressing the needs of couples in relation to marriage counseling and enrichment. This study takes into account and discusses how issues such as *familismo* and *personalismo* impact both the felt need for counseling ministry and the effectiveness of these churches to provide such services. Surveyed churches show a disconnect between importance of counseling and enrichment verses how often these services are offered or used. There is a need for de-stigmatizing of counseling services that embraces the idea of seeing the church as a body of counselors, una familia (a family).

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROBLEM

It is an important function of the church to support and encourage married couples to maintain their spiritual health so that they may serve the church and one another in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. This is no small task. The coming together of a man and a woman as ‘one flesh’ is a serious covenant relationship before the Lord. The general consensus among churches that marriage is an important covenant before God is undisputed, and as a result, many churches feel the need to provide guidance and support to these couples.

Although the importance of such a union is readily recognized, there is a problem in the church with regards to how this union is nurtured. There is an overarching phenomenon that occurs in which the much-needed ministry of pastoral care/counseling to married couples of the church is lacking. There is a fair amount of attention given to pre-marital counseling and crisis counseling, however, the ongoing nurturing of married couples as a general value in the church is greatly overlooked.

Although this is a problem that can be seen across churches and cultures in the United States, particular attention will be given to Hispanic churches that are evangelico (evangelical) in the Saint Louis, Missouri region. This study will emphasize how these churches are approaching pastoral care/counseling needs of married congregants, and the community at large. Almost no research has been done on this particular aspect of pastoral care/counseling in this region. A study from Pulpit and Pew surveyed 260 Hispanic Protestant congregations across the United States, and found that 55.6% of them were engaged in pastoral counseling, and out of 210 churches surveyed, 44.9% of them were

engaged in family counseling.<sup>1</sup> These statistics show that almost half of the Hispanic churches surveyed across the nation were actively engaged in the ministry of pastoral and/or family counseling. In obvious contrast, this means that almost half of the churches were not. Taking a specific look at Hispanic churches in Saint Louis, MO one will be able to see how churches in this region compare to those surveyed in the nation as a whole. It will be important to uncover what some of the underlying contributors are to such a lack of emphasis on couples counseling in the Hispanic context.

In the context of evangelical Protestant Hispanic churches, it begs the following questions. Are these churches in Saint Louis MO addressing the needs of couples in their church? Are they providing counseling services? How is the effectiveness of these services being measured? What is the awareness level of support available to couples in the congregation?

By looking at Protestant Hispanic churches in Saint Louis, it will be important to discover how these churches are addressing and assessing those needs of their congregants with regards to pastoral care/counseling for couples intending to have a healthy marriage. This will have to be done through the cultural lenses of the Hispanic church, including socioeconomic and cultural attitudes that are associated with receiving counseling in the first place. A brief description of some key terms will be helpful in clarifying *who* we are talking about here and *what* are some of the cultural attitudes among Hispanics.

### Hispanics in Saint Louis

Before one can delve too far into what pastoral care/counseling work is being done among Hispanic churches in Saint Louis, it is helpful to more clearly identify *who* is being referenced in this study when the term *Hispanic* is used. Although some varying definitions exist, *Hispanic* will refer to any person whose family (whether parents, grandparents, or beyond) originate from a Spanish-speaking

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<sup>1</sup> Edwin I. Hernández et al., *Strengthening Hispanic Ministry Across Denominations: A Call to Action* (North Carolina: Pulpit and Pew Research on Pastoral Leadership, 2003), 23.

country. This includes the majority of the countries where Spanish is spoken from Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Spain. Understanding that some people who are Hispanic by this definition may not self-identify as such, this term will be used strictly to identify churches and people of Spanish-speaking origin. This does not necessitate that Spanish is the primary language spoken at these churches as some of them may provide services in Spanish and/or English. This term also does not intend to speak for the personal self-identification preferences of the churches nor its members participating in this study.

Understanding that Hispanic refers to people of Spanish-speaking origin, it is important to look at the prevalence of Hispanics in Saint Louis, MO and understand the context in which this study is based. According to the most recent US Census Bureau of 2014, the estimated population in the city of Saint Louis is just over 317,000 people.<sup>2</sup> An estimated 3.8% of that population (approximately 12,000 people) are classified as Hispanic or Latino. Since Hispanics have a very visible, but not extensive presence in St. Louis, it will be easier to do a more comprehensive study of all of the Protestant Hispanic churches in this region. As the numbers continue to increase over the years, this study hopes to be an exhaustive evaluation that will help inform and guide further counseling ministry to the Hispanic population of St. Louis city.

#### Understanding *Familismo* among Hispanics

Before one can reflect on how these churches are addressing pastoral counseling one should look at how Hispanics historically have engaged with the concept of counseling in times of need. Although no one person can speak to the mindset of an entire people group, it can be helpful to identify some particular themes that exist. *Familismo* is quite possibly one of the strongest contributors to the

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<sup>2</sup> United States Census Bureau, "State and County Quick Facts," United States Census Bureau, accessed October 26, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/29/29510.html>



lack of dependence that Hispanics put on churches as pastoral counselors, as well as the lack of importance that Hispanic church leadership puts on providing these services.

*Familismo*, simply put, is the interdependence and connectedness that exists between Hispanic families that prioritize all aspects of family life (relationships, responsibilities, joys and conflicts) as a collective issue. The American sense of individualism has no place in the Hispanic family as everything is considered a 'family matter'.

Moreover, the American concept of a *nuclear family* all but dissipates as the Hispanic family includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and even in some cases, close neighbors and friends as active participants in all family matters. In terms of counseling, it becomes easy to understand why Hispanics would not need to seek pastoral counseling when they have family.

Familismo stresses the duties of family members to help one another always, but even more so in the face of serious problems such as alcohol or drug addiction. Poverty and family honor also play a role in intensifying *familismo*, because they promote even stronger family ties as a survival safety net. Further, family honor dictates shielding family conflict, shame, or deviation from external scrutiny.<sup>3</sup>

This concept of familismo contributes to a sense of belonging and support from a larger family system that mainstream American culture does not share.

#### Understanding *Personalismo* and *Simpatía* among Hispanics

Communication among Hispanics is often characterized as warm and welcoming. Part of the underlying reasons for that has to do with a strong sense of *personalismo* and *simpatía*. *Personalismo* affirms relationships that are friendly, mutually respectful, and invites emotional closeness.

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<sup>3</sup> Celia Jaes Falicov, *Latino Families in Therapy: A Guide to Multicultural Practice* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1998), 164.

*Personalismo* “has important implications for how Latinos perceive and respond to environments (e.g. hospitals, mental health agencies) that are quite often impersonal and formal.”<sup>4</sup> Counseling, in general, has historically had a very *formal* and *impersonal* stigma attached to it that may contribute to why Hispanics are turned off at the idea of it.

*Simpatía* is very closely related to *personalismo* as it refers to a ‘keeping the peace’ among relationships. The goal is to maintain harmony between family and friends, even at the cost of one’s own personal needs. Codependence, though not used as a direct characteristic of *simpatía* here, has often been coupled with this cultural value as an extreme version of *simpatía*. Due to this strong sense of ‘peace-keeping’, “direct argument or contradiction is considered rude.”<sup>5</sup> When viewed in this light, it becomes clearer why Hispanics may tend to view it as disrespectful to cause a fuss over disagreements. Furthermore, when help *is* needed, one can always turn to *la familia* (the family).

#### Understanding *Machismo* among Hispanics

*Machismo* is another strong contributor that informs how Hispanic couples interact with one another, and why they might not opt for counseling. Historically, *machismo* has referred to violent, dominant, and sexist male behavior towards women. Although, often casted in a negative light, when looking at its original definition, *machismo* also has positive qualities that speak to couples dynamics as well. Psychologists propose a more thorough definition.

*Machismo* refers to a man’s responsibility to provide for, protect, and defend his family. His loyalty and sense of responsibility to family, friends, and community make him a good man. The Anglo-American definition of *macho* that describes sexist, male-chauvinist behavior is radically

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4 Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, Patricia Arredondo, and Maritza Gallardo-Cooper, *Counseling Latinos and La Familia: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 44.

5 Donald R. Atkinson , *Counseling American Minorities* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 292.

different from the original Latino meaning of *machismo*, which conveys the notion of “an honorable and responsible man.”<sup>6</sup>

This definition does not refute that there are, in fact, many cases of sexist behavior that results in violence and male-dominance between Hispanic couples. However, understanding that there is also a genuine and honorable quality in Hispanic men “to provide for, protect, and defend his family”<sup>7</sup>, can help inform why men would feel responsible to come up with the solution to marital problems on their own. The man will care for all family needs and problems. And as mentioned earlier, if he *does* require help, *familismo* will get him through anything.

If you couple the psychologist definition of *machismo* with the Hispanic Protestant value to place males as the biblically-ordained authoritative head of the household, there is little room left for seeking help outside of the familial unit. In such a marriage where the male has been given cultural and spiritual authority, the man can solve or ignore marital conflict as he sees fit. The wife, as a submissive and honorable woman, can defer to his judgment.

A disclaimer must be put here to clarify that no judgment should be attached to this line of thinking. General norms and ideas are being described here to give context to *machismo* dynamics at play in Hispanic marriages. This, in no way, discounts that there are many Hispanics who follow this line of thinking while still displaying couple dynamics that value shared leadership and decision-making in marital affairs.

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6 Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, Patricia Arredondo, and Maritza Gallardo-Cooper, *Counseling Latinos and La Familia: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 50.

7 Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, and Gallardo-Cooper, *Counseling Latinos and La Familia*, 50.

## Marriage Ministry Among Hispanics

In the context of *familismo*, *personalismo*, and *machismo*, it can be clear to see why family issues would stay within the family. These terms and how they impact ministry of the counseling in the church will be further discussed in the literature review chapter. However, their prevalence does beg the question, if family is all you need, does couples ministry have a place in the Hispanic church? And if so, what does that ministry look like? It is common practice before couples decide to get married in a church to receive pre-marital counseling. Historically, counseling was purposed at discussing the act of marrying itself. "If people were not allowed to be married in a church, it was for ecclesiastical or theological reasons. The intent was to protect the institution of marriage itself..."<sup>8</sup> More recently, premarital counseling among Hispanics has been purposed at safeguarding marriages from failure and divorce. However, it is important to investigate how often these services are being provided, how, and if they are being measured, and how successful they are.

There are some churches today that require premarital counseling services in an attempt to decrease marital failure, yet the divorce rate in the church is just as high as it is in the "secular" world (Barna, 1999). Barna (2004) found that among married "born-again" Christians, 35% have experienced a divorce, which is identical to the findings among married adults who are not "born-again". Less than half of religious organizations provide premarital counseling services, and those that do are not consistently effective in reducing divorce rates.<sup>9</sup>

Although this study will not focus on how to *do* premarital counseling, looking at these statistics helps put into perspective the need for premarital counseling *along with* ongoing marriage enrichment to promote healthy, sustained marriages.

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8 Herbert Anderson and Robert Cotton Fite, *Becoming Married* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 5.

9 Dennise Damaris Lawry. "Intervention Programs for Hispanic Couples: An Adaptation Study of PREP," PhD diss., Wheaton College, 2006. In Theological Research Exchange Network, accessed August 14, 2014, <http://bookshelf.gordonconwell.edu/tren/088-0134.pdf>.

Whether churches are providing premarital counseling or not, there is what will be called here a “dropping” of the couple in which the marriage has been sanctioned, and the couple is wished the best of luck to succeed. Once couples have embarked on the journey of marriage, the sense of urgency that was once there in premarital counseling dissipates, and the couple is left to their own devices to grow a healthy and vibrant marriage. How a married couple chooses to conduct themselves and serve one another should not be seen as an issue from which the church has neither any say nor support until crisis time. Once a crisis hits, it may be too late. Marriage ministry cannot simply be preemptive and preventative, but it must be ongoing.

One of the best examples that has surfaced in this research with regards to ongoing marriage ministry has been given by John Wall in his book, Marriage, Health, and the Professions.<sup>10</sup> He states the need for marriage counseling and enrichment that covers all stages of a marriage including premarital counseling, first years of marriage, transition to parenthood and/or adoption, marriage crisis, and what he calls the “Celebrating Achievements and Transitions across the Lifetime Marriage Journey.”<sup>11</sup> This thinking affirms that married couples need guidance and enrichment throughout all stages of their marital development in order to safeguard and nurture their ever-growing, ever-changing relationship.

#### The Ministry Focus among Hispanic Churches

If the focus for ministry among Hispanic churches has not historically been on marriage counseling and enrichment, then what *is* the ministry focus? As priorities are misplaced, couples suffer from a misguided sense of purpose. Their loyalties lie in serving the church and her ministries above serving one another. This is a fact that the church perpetuates. Serving the church is integral to the

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10 John Wall, et al., *Marriage, Health, and the Professions: If Marriage is Good for You, What Does This Mean for Law, Medicine, Ministry, Therapy, and Business?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 175-178.

11 John Wall, et al., *Marriage, Health, and the Professions*, 178.

Christian's spiritual health and community, but only if kept in the proper perspective. There is not enough attention to the fact that marriage ministry *is* and *should be* considered one of the churches ongoing ministries as well.

Couples and church leadership alike fail to realize that serving the couple and encouraging and supporting their emotional and spiritual constancy will, in turn, serve the church community better. Relational intimacy is sacrificed for the greater good of the Kingdom of God. As a result, there is a wealth of couples that are not spending enough time investing in one another as a couple, but are spending more and more time investing in the church for their ministry outlets. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than among church leaders themselves. Husbands and wives suffer from burnout as they aggressively serve the needs of the church and neglect their own familial needs.

This causes a great deal of problems for the spiritual health of the couple, and equally damaging is the fact that the church overlooks this phenomenon. Since the church's ministerial needs are being met by married congregants willing to serve more closely in church ministry, it is of little notable consequence that the married couple themselves are becoming more and more 'distant' from one another. It is for this reason that churches *must* take their role as pastoral counselors for the married couples and those seeking to marry, and provide them with consistent support that encourages a healthy balance of marriage ministry and church ministry both as problems arise *as well as* preemptively.

### Areas to Explore

Based on extensive data found in literature for church ministry and counseling, and what various years of ministry experience have shown, and the research that will be gathered from surveys and interviews, there are a number of outcomes that will be looked at in this project. They are as follows:

- (1) churches and pastors alike may not offer sufficient or extensive premarital/marital pastoral

counseling to their congregants; (2) church members have not made it a priority to know the services that are available in their own congregations; (3) among Hispanic churches there is an overarching socioeconomic/cultural stigma associated with counseling that hinders congregants from taking advantage of such services and clergy from providing/encouraging such services; (4) significant cultural factors play in role in how Hispanic counseling ministry should be approached; (5) church members and clergy do have specific preferences that are culturally informed when it comes to who they seek counseling from; and (6) not enough attention and research has been given to this topic among the Hispanic population, and much further study is required in this field.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

"I, \_\_\_\_, take thee, \_\_\_\_, to be my wedded husband/wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part."<sup>1</sup>

This all-too-familiar format for wedding vows has been widely used among religious and non-religious couples in the United States. Many citizens can almost recite these vows by memory, whether married or not. There is a lawful understanding that a marriage is an agreement between two parties to persevere through the marriage journey as a team. Unfortunately, as the years go by, more and more marriages are seeing dysfunction and divorce. Almost as common-place as these aforementioned wedding vows are ads that read like this: "Divorce for \$299. No spouse signature required." These ads are particularly prevalent in under-resourced communities throughout the United States. This study attempts to look at the effectiveness of Hispanic churches in St. Louis, MO with regards to how well they assess and/or address the needs of their married congregants. In order to validate such a study, a biblical framework must first be established.

*"It is not good for man to be alone." (Genesis 2:18)*

Marriage is a holy union before the Lord. In order to build a theological basis for this project, it is important to establish the importance of such a union in God's eyes. This first theological basis for this project is rooted in the importance of the creation of man and woman as a unit. Since the inception of creation, one can see God's value on His creation made in His own likeness. (Genesis 1:26-27). There is

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<sup>1</sup> E. Searl. Traditional Wedding Vows from Various Religions. Retrieved August 21, 2015, from <https://www.theknot.com/content/traditional-wedding-vows-from-various-religions>



supreme value given to human beings above all other of His creations. After creating man, God says, “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” (Genesis 2:18) The pairing of a man and a woman was a deliberate necessity in God’s eyes. “For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). As the two partners join in becoming ‘one flesh’, there is a holy union that is formed that nothing is to sever.

Keil and Delitzsch write,

They are the words of Moses, written to bring out the truth embodied in the fact recorded as a divinely appointed result, to exhibit marriage as the deepest corporeal and spiritual unity of man and woman, and to hold up monogamy before the eyes of the people of Israel as the form of marriage ordained by God. But as the words of Moses, they are the utterance of divine revelation; and Christ could quote them, therefore, as the word of God.<sup>2</sup>

Respecting the Lord as creator, and respecting His intent for marriage as a reflection of His relationship with us is paramount to having a successful marriage. “So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate” (Matthew 19:6). God has created man and women to be relational creatures. Our primary relationship is first with Him, and every other relationship is intended to model a Christ-like relationship with mutual respect, love, and consideration. When it comes to the relationship between a man and woman in marriage, the covenant bond created is unparalleled in creation. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in relationship with one another and are *one* since the beginning of time. (Jn. 1:1-2) God’s ideal for marriage is to mimic this type of intimate relationship, that although it is not the same, the marriage is made up of two individuals who *become one* through their union.

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<sup>2</sup> Carl Friedrich Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 58.

As the 'two become one', this requires that the physical and emotional connection each individual has with his/her own blood line is also now absorbed in the marriage. A husband and wife are not just marrying one another, but they are marrying into a family, into a history, into a culture, and into a commitment. Historically, leaving and cleaving to another family was a very deep cultural issue that entailed the woman's adoption of two families.

When a woman marries into a family, she acquires a marital affiliation, namely, the residential household of her husband; but she doesn't thereby lose her natal affiliation, that is, the family into which she was born. Israelite patrilocal marriage customs therefore meant that Israelite women had two sets of family ties and were thus uniquely positioned to facilitate relationships between them.<sup>3</sup>

This is a very Eastern view on leaving and cleaving, where a woman's identity is woven now between two family lines. As Meyers explains, a woman must now reconcile both families as if they were both her own. As the two become one flesh, their two families become one large family. The roles of a husband and wife in such a union have often become debated. While many arguments focus on issues of authority and submission, God calls couples to have a Christ-centered approach that focuses on mutual submission to Him.

In her book, *Counseling Intercultural Couples*, Lan Pfeil expresses the diversity of opinions that exists to describe husband and wife roles. There is a "...'traditional' (submission) opinion, the 'equality' (partnership) position, and the 'continuum' position."<sup>4</sup> Regardless of one's biblical view on gender roles in the marriage, Pfeil reminds us that mutual submission to the Lord reflects the biblical approach God intended for marriage.

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3 Carol Meyers, *Life and Culture in the Ancient Near East*, (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2003), 187.

4 Lan Pfeil, *Counseling Intercultural Couples: A Christian Perspective* (Longwood, Florida: Advantage Books, 1978), 83.

...most proponents do acknowledge the importance of the partners' submission to the Lord, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling their roles (Ephesians 5:18-21). Moreover, Christian leadership is not 'lording' but servant leadership (Matthew 20:25-28). Jesus came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Marriage involves sacrificial love, as Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25).<sup>5</sup>

God's importance on human creation is uncontested. By nature of being created in the *imago Dei*, it is clear that God esteems humankind above all other creation. No other creature has such distinction. Furthermore, the fact that woman was created for the purposes of providing companionship with man shows the level of attention the Lord takes in caring for His esteemed creation. God created man with woman to achieve one of the deepest forms of intimacy apart from our relationship with Christ. As the two become one flesh, there is a beautiful purpose in their union.

Marriage is exactly where God intends the act of sex to happen. Such sex is God's highest form of human intimacy and design for pleasure...Biblical sex has three purposes. One is for procreation (Gen. 9:7), another is to build intimacy and closeness (2:24), and the third is for pleasure (v.25).<sup>6</sup>

Humankind is esteemed above all creation, and is created with the potential to participate in the most intimate human relationship possible through marriage. It is this biblical understanding that fuels the basis for this project. In order to study how effectively Hispanic churches are attending to the counseling needs of married congregants one must first establish the value of such a study. Man matters to God, woman matters to God, and a holy union between them matters to God. Having

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<sup>5</sup> Lan Pfeil, 83.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Clinton and John Trent, *Marriage and Family Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 263.

established the importance of the marital union, it is important to now delve into the preservation and promotion of the married couple as a unit.

*“What God has joined together, let no man separate.” (Mark 10:8)*

This leads to the second theological basis: The preservation and promotion of the married couple as a unit. For those who marry, the Lord has called them to a covenant relationship with one another. This union should not be taken lightly and requires a great deal of attention through care and counseling. Although certain circumstances do permit divorce in the Bible (Ezra 10:44; Mt 19:9), it is overwhelmingly frowned upon by the Lord. Divorce was not God’s intention for humankind, and it is something that the God hates. (Mal 2:16, Rom 7:2). Despite this truth, society considers divorce a much more viable option than before.

Cultural trends today among Christians and non-Christians alike are becoming more and more tolerant of divorce. Among Hispanics the divorce rate is lower than for the non-Hispanic populations. Studies show Hispanics are 2-3% less likely to divorce than other races.<sup>7</sup> This may indicate that marriages are more successful among Hispanics or that problems are tolerated and ignored more among Hispanic couples. Though the research is lacking to clarify the reasons behind this trend, it still remains clear that marriages are in danger of staying together as originally intended. Cohabitation is also on the rise, as couples are avoiding a formal commitment in exchange for an easy-out if the situation warrants. Since Hispanics encompass a variety of people groups such as Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Central Americans, etc., there is very little research that sufficiently covers the diversity in statistics. As a general statement, cohabitation is growing among Hispanics in the United

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/research-and-policy/marriage-facts/culture/hispanics-and-latinos/index.aspx#marriage>

States. Even though this is the case, Hispanics overwhelmingly still view marriage as a serious life-long commitment that is better than singleness.<sup>8</sup>

God desires for married couples not only to stay together, but also to prosper together. It is for this reason that it becomes the work not only of the married couple themselves, but of the family of believers to help uphold couples through their entire marriage. This includes crisis and trauma as well as everyday healthy communication and glorifying the Lord as one flesh.

We are created as relational beings, and therefore must embrace our nature in community. “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching.” (Heb. 10:24-25). It is our nature and our responsibility to encourage one another towards living a holy and fruitful life before the Lord. Hispanic couples rely very heavily on the advice of their immediate families to provide counsel, and rely less heavily on the informal and formal counseling of the body of Christ.

Building healthy marriages requires trusting in the body of believers to care for their struggles and their joys equally. If the couples expand into having larger families, which is very typical among Hispanic families, the need for spiritual guidance and growth for the *entire* family comes into play as the couple is now a spiritual model for their children as well. “Hispanic couples generally have more children than other racial and ethnic groups. In 2000 the birth rate for Hispanics was 96 per 1000, compared with 69 for Blacks and 57 for Whites.”<sup>9</sup>

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8 Christopher Ellison, Nicholas Wolfinger, and Aida Ramos-Wada, *Attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation among working-age Latinos: Does Religion Matter?* (Online: <http://paa2011.princeton.edu/papers/112269>. Accessed Aug 19, 2015).

9 Hispanics and Latinos. (n.d.). Retrieved July 23, 2015, from E. Searl. Traditional Wedding Vows from Various Religions. Retrieved August 21, 2015, from <https://www.theknot.com/content/traditional-wedding-vows-from-various-religions>

Marriage is hard work, and it is the responsibility of the couple to do all they can to ‘let no man separate’ requires a consistent surrender to the Lord.

The injunction of Paul is to call the parties to their senses and ask them if they were subjecting themselves to the Lordship of Christ or whether they were looking out for their own interests. The apostle’s injunction becomes the remedy for all conflicts, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ...The Christian must never forget that it is not an issue of ‘my way’ or ‘your way’ ...God is always present and the parties need to respect the Lord.”<sup>10</sup>

The very concept of a man and a woman becoming one in marriage started with the creation of humankind (Gen. 2:22-24). The existence of such a union should cause the Church to give attention to the needs, spiritual growth, and preservation of such a union. It is for this reason, that pastoral counseling services for couples should not be seen as an *extra* ministry when convenient. Rather, it should be seen as one of the regular ministries of the church that is just as indispensable and nonnegotiable as preaching and teaching, communion, worship, tithes/ offerings, and the like. Most churches would heartily argue the need for any of these aforementioned elements if they were lacking among the church’s core values. The same attention should be given to marriages being kept honorable and pure (Hebrews 13:4). The Church is integral in shepherding couples to this end.

Cultural stigmas do exist with regards to counseling that can hinder couples from seeking help. Hispanic families, in particular, battle *machismo* and *familismo* that fuel the desire to keep issues private. God calls us to embrace the church family to help provide counsel and healing when needed. “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” (1 Cor 12:26). This biblical principal exalts all parts of God’s creation on equal playing field. Rejoicing with

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<sup>10</sup> Vincent Costa, (2006). An Integrated View of Marital and Family Counseling Illustrated with Case Study. Boston, MA, 80-81.

couples and suffering with couples encompasses all aspects of their marriage walk from the honeymoon to retirement and everything in between.

This becomes particularly necessary when dealing with couples that have made a commitment before God to lift one another up in this same healing. When dysfunction occurs within the unit, it becomes the work of the church to help mend that covenant relationship and restore it back to a healthy one that honors God. However, this healing community is something that not only applies to 'crisis' situations, but to the promotion of day-to-day healthy relationships among couples. Although it was thought that pastoral counseling was most often used to help sort out problems of prayer, direction, doctrine, etc, research has showed otherwise.

More often, people came with marriage tensions, crises, depression, interpersonal conflicts, confusion, and other problems in living. Jesus was concerned about these kinds of problems. He stated that he had come to give life in abundance and in all its fullness...(there are many however) who are not experiencing a very abundant life on earth."<sup>11</sup>

As such, counsel and healing should be approached as an ongoing need in the church, and not just a ministry for when emergencies arise.

Whether a married couple has children or not, once married, the first ministry of their marriage is the marriage itself. Counseling is a work of exhortation. In Romans 12:18 *paraklesis* (or a coming alongside of/encouraging) is listed as a spiritual gift that is a necessary part of the functional body of Christ. "If we read Acts and the Epistles it becomes clear that the church was not only an evangelizing, teaching, discipling community – it was also a healing community...in which group members help each other by providing support, challenge, guidance, and encouragement that might not be possible

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<sup>11</sup> Costa, 39.

otherwise.”<sup>12</sup> One of the most important functions of the church is to provide a healing atmosphere where members feel embraced, consoled, encouraged, and uplifted in times of heartache and crisis. The church body understands that the marriage union is a covenant relationship that is not meant to ever be broken. In recognizing this, the church body is taking on the responsibility to uphold the married couple in biblical truth to help preserve this covenant.

In our country, marriage is a legal contract based on rights and responsibilities. But a covenant is more than a contract, more than a declaration of interdependence. The heart of a covenant marriage is “the Lord’s great love,” which comes from the very heart of God and never fails. (Lam 3:22)

Just as the married couple makes a vow before the Lord, so it is with the body of believers. In condoning the marriage, believers are also committing to love, support, uphold, and pray for the success of the married couple. (Eph 5:1-2) It is not light undertaking for the couple to dedicate themselves to staying together, but is something that the Lord requires at all costs. A commitment to ‘let no man separate’ necessitates a commitment to peace and reconciliation.

*“Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3)*

When looking at the theological basis for this project, a couple of things have been established thus far: 1) God created man and woman in His image, and created them to be social beings that thrive in relationship with one another. 2) Marriage is a covenant relationship between the couple and God, and should be preserved at all costs. Understanding these two principles brings us to our third

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<sup>12</sup> Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (United States of America: W. Publishing Group, 1988), 20.



theological basis for this project. Every effort should be made to maintain peace, wholeness, and forgiveness in the marriage as it is a reflection of God's redemptive work in us. (Eph 4:32)

Maintaining peace is something that God values, and is a necessary step towards sanctification. The Church must bear one another's burdens and restore one another (Gal 6:1-2), exhort one another (1 Thess 5:11, Heb 10:25), and counsel them towards sanctification (Col 1:28). We must help one another towards full maturity in Christ that includes the need for teaching and counsel. It requires the need for patience, love, and forgiveness. (1 Peter 4:8, Eph 4:2-3). Embracing these biblical truths means embracing our roles as the body of Christ to uplift one another in care and counseling. Empowering and encouraging others is the work of all believers. Howard Clinebell emphasizes a holistic liberation growth model of pastoral care and counseling.

The overarching goal of all pastoral care and counseling (and of all ministry) is to liberate, empower, and nurture wholeness centered in the Spirit...Pastoral care and counseling seek to utilize and integrate both psychological and theological insight regarding the human situation, and the healing of persons...Pastoral care is the shared ministry of the pastor and the whole congregation.<sup>13</sup>

This project is based on the biblical concept of the fellowship of believers coming alongside couples in solidarity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, *familismo* plays a massive role in Latino ideology. Already deep within the Latino culture is a desire to empower and liberate one another within the family unit. This is an admirable quality of Latino culture that counter-acts the more distancing qualities of Western, Caucasian views on family. For Latino populations, the family unit is very extensive.

*Familismo* or "Familism" typically refers to a strong value placed on family relationships, community, and the importance of intergenerational kinship networks...their social identity is

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13 Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Health Growth* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1992), 26-27.

relational rather than individual...A focus on the nuclear family evidenced in dominant Christian family ethics often overlooks the “extended family solidarities and caregiving activities” of such kinship groups. This understanding of family life aims to offer a sense of belonging so that members may flourish in interdependent relationship.<sup>14</sup>

The biblical growth model that urges congregations and pastors to do the work of care and counseling complements these already strong qualities of *familismo*. The challenge then, becomes, allowing the church to be part of *la familia* (the family) so as to put her in a position of being an audible voice for counsel. It is unrefuted that many Latino communities already *do* consider the church a place of guidance and support. However, this project is based on the biblical principal that both the married couple *and* the church take up their roles as soul care workers that inspire wholeness in Christ.

*In* order to raise one another up into a position of wholeness, it is important to remember our standing before God. Although we are created in the *Imago Dei*, we are *like* God, but we are not God. As such, we are created to have an intimate relationship with God that reflects our reverence and worship of Him as our creator. In order to embody bearing one another’s burdens and restoring and exhorting one another to a state of sanctified wholeness, it is necessary that we recognize in ourselves our limitations, our sinful tendencies, and our areas for growth.

Awareness of one’s finitude, limitations and brokenness is essential, alongside awareness of one’s remarkable potentialities. Without this, one easily falls into self-idolatry and the narcissistic pride that alienates persons from nurturing interaction with other people, the biosphere and God...It can provide a reality-based foundation for our self-esteem and thus reduce the narcissism and pride (defenses against low self-esteem) that undercut wholeness.<sup>15</sup>

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14 Erin Bringham, *Church in the Modern World: Fifty Years after Gaudium et Spes* (Landham, MD: Littlefield Publishing Group, 2015), 98.

15 Bringham, 52.

Unfortunately, in our current society, understanding one's limitations and brokenness can be associated with weakness. Nothing could be further from the truth. When we realize our finiteness before the Lord, it is not meant to diminish our self-worth, but to elevate His worthiness.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.<sup>16</sup>

Our ultimate purpose in life is to bring Glory to God and to share His message with all who will listen. (Mark 16:15) A biblical understanding of wholeness admits that embracing our limitations and allowing the Holy Spirit to be an agent of change is the compliment to achieving peace and wholeness. His Word is unparalleled in creation. (Isa. 40:6-8). It is *in* our weakness that we can see change happen. (Rom. 8:26) Clinebell reminds us of a particularly salient truth.

Enabling people to increase the constructiveness of their behavior as well as their feelings, attitudes, and values is crucial in the helping process...To be an effective growth-nurturer, ministers must continue to grow...we must be vulnerable enough to face and accept our own continuing need for healing. Thus, we become "wounded healers" (Henry Nouwen).<sup>17</sup>

Our sinfulness is not something to be afraid of. Rather, it is something that should spur us on towards change. "For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God."<sup>18</sup> It is in this state of self-awareness coupled with an understanding of God's saving grace through forgiveness that equips us to

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16 Colossians 1:15-20

17 Clinebell, 55.

18 Romans 3:23

speak into the lives of others. (1 Jn. 1:9, Mt. 6:14-15). Admitting our shortcomings and asking for forgiveness brings about wholeness. “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” (Act 3:19)

Out of a grateful heart to the Lord we are to love, forgive, live at peace with those around us. Church families are to be places of peace and reconciliation, and not of condemnation. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us.”<sup>19</sup> Lying within the word of God and the family of believers is a great wealth of counsel and truth to support a couple in need (Psalm 119:105). It is the work of the pastoral counselor and the church to use the power and truth that is found in the Word of God to bring others to a place of sanctification. (John 17:17) Marriage is a natural recipe for conflict as two individuals come together as *one flesh*. Ephesians 4:3 reminds us to do all that is possible to keep peace and unity among the church body.

There is always danger of discord where people are brought together in one society. There are so many different tastes and habits; there is such a variety of intellect and feeling; the modes of education have been so various, and the temperament may be so different, that there is constant danger of division...In the bond of peace – this was to be by the cultivation of that peaceful temper which binds us all together. The American Indians usually spoke of peace as a “chain of friendship” which was to be kept bright. Their meaning here is, that they should be bound and united together in the sentiments and affections of peace. It is not mere “external” unity; it is not a mere unity of creed; it is not a mere unity in the forms of public worship; it is such as the Holy Spirit produces in the hearts of Christians, when it fills them all with the same love, and joy, and peace in believing.<sup>20</sup>

Although, in context, Ephesians 4:3 was not referring to married couples directly,

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19 1 John 4:19

20 Barnes Bible Commentary taken Online at: <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/ephesians/4.html>

it does speak to all peoples in community. It is the responsibility of all people, married or not, to seek out peace amongst one another. Peace is not a passive attempt at *avoiding* conflict, but it is an active attempt at *confronting* all situations in love. As a result of the fall, peace no longer exists automatically; it is something that must be worked for. The proper pursuit of peace brings about restoration and reconciliation in times of crisis and in times of joy. This is the relational model that God desires for us since creation. “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”<sup>21</sup> This also means that it is the responsibility of the church to seek peace with one another, and to promote peace where they see it lacking. Just as a married couple has made a commitment before God, so the body of Christ is making a commitment to hold one another up in love.

This project sits on the biblical basis that marriage is a beautiful relationship that needs to be maintained and encouraged through all circumstances. No one can successfully bring about peace, reconciliation, and unity without tapping into the biblical model of loving one another unconditionally. Without love, all things are done in vain. (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you,  
so you must love one another.” (John 13:34)*

Marriage is a gift from God. It was out of love for Adam that God decided to create a helper suitable for his companionship that the two may live together in peace and love. (Gen. 2:18, 24) God loved us so much that He created us in His image and in relationship with one another and called it good. (Gen. 1:31) For those who have children, that is a further gift from God. (Psalm 127:3-4). The preservation of a marriage and the need for counseling ministry necessitates reciprocal love. The word of God emphasizes that we love one another in *response* to the Lord first loving us. (1 John 4:19)

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21 Rom. 12:18

This project is theologically rooted in God's call for us to love one another with our entire being. (Luke 10:27) Marriage is anchored by love and cannot survive if biblical love is not present. One of the best definitions for biblical love is directly taken from scripture.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.<sup>22</sup>

Oster's commentary on 1 Corinthians describes a biblical perspective on love that highlights three distinct facets of love. He sees 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13 as thematically divided in the following way: 1. Gifts without love is pointless, 2. the virtues of love, and 3. the permanence of love.<sup>23</sup> Since marriage is a gift, one could argue that Oster would agree that marriage without love is pointless. It will have no purpose and bear no fruit. The original command to "be fruitful and increase in number"<sup>24</sup> cannot be accomplished without love. All of the virtues of love that Oster refers to are absolute requirements to a successful marriage: "patient", "kind", "does not dishonor", "not self-seeking", "keeps no record of wrongs", etc.<sup>25</sup> Love is also permanent. By definition, unless marriages end in divorce for reasons that are biblically acceptable, there is no reason that a marriage would not succeed. "Love

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<sup>22</sup> 1 Cor. 13:4-13

<sup>23</sup> Richard Oster, *The College Press NIV Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing, 1999), 301-308.

<sup>24</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>25</sup> 1 Cor. 13:4-5

never fails” (1 Cor 13:8). If marriages fail for other reasons, this puts into question if true biblical love was the foundation in the first place.

As humans are sinful by nature (Rom. 3:23), it is clear that people can struggle with being selfish, easily angered, envious, prideful, and bitter in relationships. Although the bible urges Christians to act in a loving manner with one another, the virtues of love defined in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians are a direct confrontation to the way that humans naturally act with one another. (I Cor. 13:4-7) It is evident here what true love should look like between believers, and the permanence that results. Marriage is no exception to this expectation of love. In fact, marriage, in particular, is given special attention in the bible with regards to how husbands and wives ought to love one another. (Ephesians 5:24-25)

...the church’s subjection to Christ is proposed as an example to wives, so the love of Christ to his church is proposed as a pattern to husbands: and while such examples are offered to the imitation of both, and so much is required of each of them, neither has reason to complain of the divine injunction. The love which God requires from the husband toward his wife, compensates for that subjection which he demands from her to her husband: and the prescribed subjection of the wife is an abundant return for that love of the husband which God hath made her due. In what follows we are told that the end for which Christ loved the church, was that he might make her holy and save her; therefore, if husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church, they must endeavor to promote their faith and piety, must strive to make them wise and holy.<sup>26</sup>

The ways in which God calls husband and wife to love one another is reflective of the ways in which Christ has loved us: sacrificially and unconditionally. Due to our fallen nature, as the years go by in marriage, it becomes all too easy to hold on to bitterness or unresolved or even unrealized conflict. Love means being proactive in one’s relationship. “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.”<sup>27</sup> Loving one another requires that we hold one another accountable in

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph Benson. "Commentary on Ephesians 5:25". Joseph Benson's Commentary. "http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/rbc/view.cgi?bk=eph&ch=5". 1857.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Peter 4:8

all things. Marriages are particularly susceptible to brushing things under the rug. It is for this reason that this project must be strongly rooted in the biblical basis of love. The last component that must accompany all of this basis is diligent prayer.

*“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” (Col. 4:2)*

This project is rooted on the biblical basis that our churches, our communities, and our couples, in particular, need to be praying and need to be prayed for. A prayerful heart described in Scripture can be described with five characteristics: 1. Pray with a persistent and thankful heart, 2. Pray with a repentant heart, 3. Pray with a relational heart, 4. Pray with an expectant heart, and 5. Pray with a Spirit-led heart. These areas highlight the importance of prayer comes that comes directly from scripture. It is important to look at each of them individually.

*1. Pray with a persistent and thankful heart.* “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”<sup>28</sup> Included with a persistent heart in this verse, we also see a thankful heart. Thankfulness is required in order for someone to have the drive to pray consistently. That is why these two qualities are linked hand in hand. Too often Christians get serious about praying for troubled relationships only once a crisis has already hit. This biblical mandate to “pray without ceasing” implies an infinite time-frame, with no beginning or no end. By definition, this places value on praying *before* crisis, *during* crisis, and *after* crisis.

But marriage provides a base in which you can give one another the security to come face-to-face with who you really are and have the freedom to be set free to heal and grow. That's why praying in advance of these things happening doesn't mean that difficult things won't ever happen, but if something does, you will be able to survive these times successfully, know God is using them to perfect both of you.<sup>29</sup>

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28 1 Thess. 5:16-18

29 Stormie Omartian, *The Power of Prayer to Change your Marriage* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007), 25.



However, God consistently instructs us to remember that prayer is *not* simply for the purposes of addressing crisis. Praying without ceasing is not limited strictly to a time-frame, but also refers to circumstance: We are to pray without ceasing regardless of the circumstance. If it is joy or strife, prayers are to be consistent, and primarily for the purpose of bringing glory to God.

As one engages in a mindset of persistent prayer, it is critical to look at *how* we ought to pray. It is not enough to simply pray all of the time if our words are not coming from a place of humility and repentance before God.

2. *Pray with a repentant heart.* All too often, prayers take on a “*Fix it*” quality: *fix* my situation, *fix* my spouse, *fix* my finances.” This type of mentality lacks true humility. With regards to marital stress, it is important not to point fingers, but instead, to engage prayer in the way God intended: with a repentant heart.

A heart that says I am willing to see my errors, and no matter how I have been offended by the things my spouse has done, I will clean house on my own soul. I will pray to have eyes to see the truth about myself before I pray the same for my husband (wife)...God said of Israel that *they* would determine whether He could *bless* them or whether they would receive *curses* instead...We, likewise, determine whether we will have blessings or misery in our marriage by whether we will listen to God or chase after what feels good. Whether we will self-righteously think we don’t ever need to repent of anything because we see worse sins in our spouse, or we will bite the bullet and repent of every bad thought our action as we humbly come before God in prayer.<sup>30</sup>

Prayer requires a repentant heart that does not judge others, but rather, focuses on one’s own personal relationship with God. It is from this place of wholeness and repentance that God can hear our prayers and respond. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify

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<sup>30</sup> Omartian, 28.

us from all unrighteousness.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it has been described here, a persistent heart prays at all times, in all circumstances, and a repentant heart prays from a right standing before the Lord. The third characteristics requires a relational heart.

3. *Pray with a relational heart.* This biblical basis for prayer is two-fold. Christians should regularly pray for themselves AND regularly pray for others and their communities. Communities need churches that will walk alongside them in all struggles of daily life. One of the best ways to do this is through active and fervent prayer for one another.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.<sup>32</sup>

For the married couple, churches should be expected to be a prayer resource for them to share their needs openly and in trust. By actively praying for one another we are advocating for their welfare. (Jer. 29:7) As we pray with a persistent, repentant, and relational heart, it puts us in a place of vulnerability and trust. It is from this position that we learn to pray with expectant hearts that the Lord will hear our cries.

4. *Pray with an expectant heart.* To use a marriage analogy, think about when a couple is at the altar about to exchange vows. Once couples have made it to this point, there is an expectant heart that accompanies the question, “Do you take him/her to have and to hold...” Because of their deep love for one another and their thoughtful consideration of the weight of such a covenant, the couple reaches this point in the service with expectant hearts. They confidently ask the other to join them in marriage and

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31 1 John 1:9

32 James 5:13-16

they fully expect a positive response. This is based on a prior understanding and trust that has been built between the two. Our prayer relationship can be likened to this kind of expectation. However, it is even *more* certain and more rewarding than any relationship forged on earth. “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”<sup>33</sup>

In marriage the couple must know first-hand the redemptive power of prayer. Whether a couple finds themselves in a *good season* in marriage or in a *rough season*, praying with an expectant heart is critical to protecting, maintaining, and growing the marriage bond. The power of the church to have kingdom effect on a couple’s marriage quality and longevity should not be overlooked.

...the church was not only an evangelizing, teaching, discipling community – it was also a healing community. Healing communities are groups of people “characterized by intense commitment to the group and by a common interest in healing... [all types of] psychological, behavioral, or spiritual maladies...It is sad that many contemporary churches seem to be little more than listless groups of rigid people who never admit to having needs or problems, who attend uninspiring services out of habit, and who leave most of the work to the overburdened pastor...far from the dynamic growth producing fellowship that Christ intended it to be.”<sup>34</sup>

It is critical that both the couple and the church family at large are upholding married congregants in persistent, repentant, relational, and expectant prayer. This leads to the final characteristic of prayer.

5. *Pray with a Spirit-led heart.* The Lord has given the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us know how we should pray. Our sinful nature limits our ability to always know what is good for us. (Mt. 26:41) The theological basis for this project must be firmly rooted in prayer that is led by the Holy Spirit. Praise God that we have an intercessor from the Lord that cares for our emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being.

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33 1 John 5:14-15

34 Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, (Grand Rapids, MI: W Publishing Group, 1988), 20-21.

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.<sup>35</sup>

Relying on the Holy Spirit is imperative if any relationship is going to flourish.

This project implies a need for couples to receive empowerment, encouragement, and commitment from their partners, as well as their congregations. Humans have an amazing capacity to impact one another towards healing, but it is important to remember that we are the vessels for the ultimate healing that comes from the Holy Spirit.

This project will explore how effective churches are at assessing and providing counseling needs for Hispanic couples in their congregations. Any project that attempts to assess how a ministry addresses a felt need must have its theological framework established by Scripture. It is imperative that any kind of pastoral/congregational care have its foundation in the aforementioned theological aspects.

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<sup>35</sup> Rom. 8:26-27

## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

There is remarkably very little literature dealing with counseling Hispanic couples in any context, and there is even less literature with regards to pastoral counseling in the Hispanic church. As such, this literature review is an extensive look at the recurring themes that have emerged from the authors that have made academic contributions in this field. This project attempts to address this under-researched topic by providing some new insight into counseling couples in the Hispanic church context.

There are many factors that should be considered when working with Hispanic people: immigration, generation level, acculturation level, language spoken, educational background, socioeconomic status, rural or urban residence, adherence to cultural values, religiosity or spirituality, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

Although there are so many factors to keep in mind when considering any couple in counseling, this review focuses on counseling the Hispanic couple and its complexities as it relates to Hispanic church ministry. In order to do that, this literature review will be thematically divided into two sections: Hispanic cultural considerations and Church counseling considerations. Although they are separate topics, they are intimately interrelated, and jointly, they will inform which aspects of this study have academic support, and which aspects of this study need more examining.

#### Three Cultural Considerations in Literature

By looking at the literature that exists about counseling Hispanic/Latino populations, authors overwhelmingly focus on the following three areas of Hispanic culture: 1. family organization and dependence, 2. spirituality, and 3. the immigrant experience. These areas are crucial to understanding

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Goldenberg and Irene Goldenberg, (2002). *Counseling Today's Families*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

the Hispanic couple and how effective counseling efforts will be as these themes are taken into consideration.

Although the discussions of worldview may seem old-fashioned to contemporary counselors or counselors-in-training, each one of us has to examine the various types of influences and experiences on our own values and beliefs. The Multicultural Counseling Competencies suggest that culturally skilled counselors identify the specific cultural group (s) from which they derive their fundamental cultural heritage and the significant beliefs and attitudes held by those cultures that they assimilate into their own attitudes and beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

In this study the pastors of all of the churches in question are themselves Hispanic. This gives a personal insight into “worldview” and the culture that would otherwise have to be learned and acquired over time as best as possible. Although this project works directly with Hispanic pastors and Hispanic congregations it does not, however, necessitate that all are aware of the many implications of one’s own culture simply by being a part of it. It is for this reason that it is important to highlight these cultural themes that are prevalent in the literature and how they affect Hispanic counseling ministry in the church.

### 1. Family Organization and Dependence

Firstly, we look at family organization and dependence. At the backdrop of Hispanic familial organization and dependence are three major concepts found in the literature: 1. *Familismo*, 2. *Personalismo*, and 3. *Machismo/Marianismo* among Hispanics. One of the leading authors in Latino families in therapy and counseling is Celia Jaes Falicov. Falicov calls the deep relationship between a Latino individual and his/her family as having to do with the “concept of connectedness”. Understanding that Latinos belong to what Falicov calls “*la gran familia*” allows the counselor to better understand the cultural significance of the family. La familia plays an enormously important role in Hispanic families

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<sup>2</sup> Patricia Arredondo, et al, *Culturally Responsive Counseling with Latinas/os* (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 2014) 19.

with regard to counseling and direction. As mentioned previously in this paper, literature has a great deal to say about *familismo*, *personalismo*, and *machismo/marianismo*, and how these cultural themes play an important role in the Hispanic lifestyle. As such, these themes dominate much of the conversation about counseling Latinos.

The first consideration is related to connectedness, and it is the concept of *familismo*. As this project will look at how Hispanic churches are approaching pastoral counseling, a few important questions will rise out of this conversation. Is counseling a necessity in the Hispanic church if *familismo* is so strong? It is undisputed that all marriages encounter hardship and need spiritual aid at one point or another. What is argued is whether or not different racial groups, and in this case, Latinos, see the church and the pastoral counselor as the answer to that need. Montilla argues that *familismo* in its most intense form, can act as a hindrance to a counselor's efforts.

...approaches to counseling and therapy with Latinos/as must also employ other frameworks and perspectives beyond those traditionally used, many of which have been based on remedial models (i.e., treating the client after a specific problem has surfaced) ...Preventative interventions forestall the onset of problems or need through the anticipation of the risks. Socioeconomic and cultural attitudes play an important role in forming both how Hispanics view counseling, and how pastoral counselor should, in turn, approach counseling. *Familismo* and *Personalismo* are perhaps the most important concepts to keep in mind when considering pastoral care among Latino/as. Latino/as are expected first and foremost to solve their problems or find the needed support at times of distress within the boundaries of the family. The help of a counselor should not be enlisted unless all the family resources have proved to be insufficient. This attitude, linked to the principle of honor within the family, embodies one of the primary blocks to the counselor's efforts.<sup>3</sup>

This idea of *familismo* puts respect and authority for counseling in the hands of the family above all others. This concept has also been described as a preference to maintain a close relationship well beyond the boundaries of a nuclear family, extending to aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and even

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3 R. Esteban Montilla and Ferney Medina, *Pastoral Care and Counseling with Latino/as* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 105.

close friends.<sup>4</sup> Pastoral counselors who can understand this concept will be better able to employ the family as an agent of change for couples seeking counseling rather than a hindrance to it.

As Montilla mentioned, the help of a counselor is very rarely sought after. Although it is more likely that Hispanic couples would approach a pastoral counselor over a clinical counselor, this service would most likely still be engaged as a last resort. Celia Falicov further identifies *familismo* as a family interdependence in every aspect of family life, which includes finances, childcare, relationships, home responsibilities, etc.<sup>5</sup> *Familismo* is a very powerful cultural characteristic. In short, it includes every extension of the family in every aspect of life. Falicov argues that *familismo* is very present among Latino families, but the degrees of intensity and influence vary depending on various factors.

As pastors engage with this issue of *familismo*, it will be important to view this as a cultural strength more than a hindrance. Patricia Arredondo contests that *familismo* has both positive and negative repercussions. Although many may view *familismo* as a positive and “natural expression of loyalty, interdependence, and collectivism,” others view it as “smothering and controlling, leading to feelings of guilt.”<sup>6</sup> A pastoral counselor will need to prayerfully help his/her congregants to introspectively measure how this comes into play in their individual lives. Loyalty and love for one’s family and a dedication to and respect for one another’s presence and opinion in all aspects of life are worthy attributes to be had. Rather than be in conflict *with* familismo, pastoral counselors will need to learn how to glean from this cultural value in a way that results in effective counseling. Ultimately, it will take a relational component in which the pastor himself/herself essentially *becomes* one of family

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4 Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, et al, *Counseling Latinos and La Familia: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 42.

5 Celia Jaes Falicov, *Latino Families in Therapy: Second Edition* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2014), 286.

6 Arredondo, 19.



emotionally so that they become another example of an extension of the family that is entrusted with counseling issues.

R. Esteban Montilla names the person entrusted with counseling issues as “*the healer*”. “The *healer* or family counselor would be most effective when he or she *becomes* a family member... (this relationship) must be based on trust, truthfulness, respect, and reciprocity of thought, feelings, and relationship.”<sup>7</sup> This concept of a pastoral counselor or “*healer*” becoming part of the family can conflict with appropriate counselor-counselee barriers that many clinicians support. The work of the Hispanic pastoral counselor becomes even more complicated as he/she walks the thin line of becoming *parte de la gran familia* (part of the big family) while still maintaining professional boundaries. This project will also attempt to address this complication through studying if and how the St. Louis area Hispanic churches are doing this.

*Familismo* has been tightly connected to Latino culture, and is overwhelmingly uncontested as a present cultural norm. There are a couple of cautions however. Firstly, it is dangerous to call *familismo* a strictly Hispanic concept. Falicov argues that there is some research to suggest *familismo* may not be uniquely tied to Latinos, but rather, shared by many other cultures to varying degrees. Whether it is an exclusive cultural value or not, it is a very present cultural norm that is helpful for pastoral counselors to be aware of when providing counsel.

Secondly, *familismo* is a cultural generalization that cannot be applied to every Latino in every context. It is therefore the responsibility of any counselor to measure for himself or herself to what degree *familismo* applies through careful and thoughtful exploration with the family members themselves. It is further important for the purposes of this project to explore how much of a felt need

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<sup>7</sup> Robert L. Smith and R. Esteban Montilla, *Counseling and Family Therapy with Latino Populations: Strategies that Work* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 37.

there is for pastoral counseling. As previously mentioned, it is very possible that Hispanics are more than content to seek their aid from their larger family systems, and not seek assistance from the church body. This project attempts to identify those needs, and clarify what services are being provided, as well as to develop a pastoral counseling ministry model for churches in the St. Louis region.

The second cultural consideration is *personalismo*. This is related to *familismo*, and is just as powerful an influence in family organization and dependence. This requires the establishment of a personal relationship before undertaking a particular task. "...without this connection, the pastoral counselor is a stranger to the family, making it difficult to achieve trust."<sup>8</sup> *Personalismo* is further described as "A very intense sense of privacy and protectiveness; a profound religious faith; a powerful notion of pride and regionalism; a strong sense of moral righteousness accompanied by a personal sense of guilt or shame; and a high degree of emotional expressiveness."<sup>9</sup> Trust is a core issue when it comes to counseling among Latinos/as. In the context of Hispanic churches, that trust has already been established to a certain degree as Hispanics display a ready admiration and respect for their church pastor. Pastors are therefore conveniently positioned to be in a place of advantage in this area. It can still be difficult, however, to break that barrier in counseling.

*Personalismo* relies heavily on keeping issues private, and saving face. Smith and Montilla argue that there can be both positive and negative effects of this type of communication.

The Latino culture's emphasis on smooth relationships, social graces, and *personalismo* has significant implications for family functioning and family therapy. On occasion, communication styles that emphasize indirectness and civility in the name of avoiding conflict can become excessive and lead to concealment, lies, and intrigues. At other times, they may provide veiled messages sent on circuitous routes.<sup>10</sup>

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8 Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo and Gallardo-Cooper, 105-106.

9 Paul B. Pedersen, et al, *Counseling Across Cultures* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 131.

10 Smith and Montilla, 58.

Within the parameters of this project, it will be important to evaluate how pastors are addressing issues that arise between couples in the church. As mentioned earlier, Hispanic pastors have a leg up in the culture, and that is critical to understanding family dynamics. However, being one *of* the culture leaves Hispanic pastors and their respective couple's ministries vulnerable to this danger of conflict avoidance. Ignoring hard issues, and saving face for the sake of avoiding shame could be detrimental to effective marriage enrichment and counseling. Furthermore, allowing *familismo* and *personalismo* to act as a substitute for church involvement in emotional health issues could be another danger.

The third cultural consideration we look at is *machismo* and *marianismo* and how it relates to the first two considerations. *Machismo* and *marianismo* are related counterparts to one another. Whereas *machismo* historically highlights the negative attributes of Hispanic males, including being "domineering, possessive, and unfaithful", *marianismo* highlights women as "submissive, self-sacrificing, and modest."<sup>11</sup> Falicov reminds us that the whole concept of *machismo* was a term tagged to Hispanic males by an outside race other than Latino. As such, this term had intentions to stereotype the male Hispanic race. Arredondo wisely notes that when considering counseling Hispanics, it will be very important to be careful of how these terms and concepts are used and referred to. She further notes that Hispanic men have reported "feeling offended when others insensitively ask them whether they are 'machos'...the terms *macho* or *machista* (macho man) are more slang and crude and are viewed as microaggression if attributed to a man indiscriminately."<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that although *machismo* is historically looked down upon as a negative thing, the definition of this word has been changing over time to embody a wider meaning.

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<sup>11</sup> Falicov. 337.

<sup>12</sup> Arredondo, 25.

*Machismo* also means that men nurture, protect their family, are breadwinners, and are responsible for their family's well-being. Other attributes of machismo include dignity, hard work, spirituality, and emotional connectedness.<sup>13</sup>

Due to the extensively negative use of the term *machismo*, it is not uncommon to hear the term

*caballerismo* (gentlemanly) used instead. This term encompasses all the positive qualities of *machismo*.

These are subtle, but important nuances to be aware of in the counseling world, *particularly* when dealing with couples counseling and relational and gender dynamics.

*Marianismo* embodies the opposite qualities of *machismo*. This term has origins in the conquest and in the Catholic Church where young girls are taught to embody the characteristics of *La Virgen Maria* (The Virgin Mary). It is from the name Maria (Mary) that we get the term *marianismo*. This concept highlights a quiet and submissive spirit. Even families that do not grow up in the Catholic Church still tend to have these expectations for the women of the household. So prevalent is the concept of *marianismo* that the “Ten Commandments of *Marianismo*” was created. Arredondo summarizes them below.<sup>14</sup>

1. Do not forget a woman's place.
2. Do not forsake tradition.
3. Do not be single, self-supporting, and independent minded.
4. Do not put your own needs first.
5. Do not wish for more from life than being a housewife.
6. Do not forget that sex is for making babies – not for pleasure.
7. Do not be unhappy with your man or criticize him for infidelity, gambling, verbal and physical abuse, or alcohol or drug abuse.
8. Do not ask for help.
9. Do not discuss personal problems outside the home.
10. Do not change those things that make you unhappy that you can realistically change.

Although Arredondo admits that times are changing, and *marianismo* may not have as strong an influence as once before, she reminds us wisely that “values and traditions passed on across generations

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13 Arredondo, 25.

14 Arredondo, 23.

are not readily erased from one's mindset." Although they may not be *seem* present, they may play an unrealized role in family life. A counseling program in the church will have to take into consideration the presence of these possibly hidden issues of gender socialization. However, when encountering couples that are less traditional, the struggle to balance family life and work life will be that much harder.

A Latina who goes against traditional gender roles often faces challenges from family and society ... (pursuing a career) often means delaying marriage and motherhood...In "*The Maria Paradox*, Gil and Vazquez (1996) discuss the dilemma faced by Latinas trying to negotiate traditional values and expectations with contemporary gender roles and the demands of the workplace. Latinas facing such role conflicts should be supported in negotiating the demands of family and career."<sup>15</sup>

Since this project deals with couples who have already married, it will be interesting to look at how *marianismo* or shying away from *marianismo* effects marital relations. It will be equally interesting to investigate if there is any correlation between less traditional families and openness towards counseling.

The social pulls of *familismo* and the relational pulls of *personalismo* coupled with the prevalence of *machismo* and *marianismo* make for a powerful force working against the intentions of pastoral counseling. Is counseling a relevant service among Hispanics when family is all you need? This project will not only be looking into the relevance of counseling, but also the reasons why or why not counseling services are utilized. It is possible that counseling *is* a needed service, but that due to saving face, keeping issues within *la familia* (the family), and being a submissive and quiet wife that these needs are ignored. It is equally possible that these needs are being met by the ever-present help found within the family unit of caregivers. This project takes heavily into consideration these cultural influences of family organization and independence.

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15 Michele R. Guzmán and Nicolás Carrasco, *Counseling and Diversity: Counseling Latino/a Americans* (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2011), 67.

## 2. Spirituality

Generally speaking, an equal contender to Family Organization and Dependence for cultural considerations is Spirituality. When considering couples counseling in the context of Hispanic churches, it proves helpful to look into the spirituality of Hispanics and how heavily they do or do not rely on the church for direction.

Faith and religion are two elements present in most experiences of Latino people...although less than 20% of Latinos and Latinas attend church regularly, the majority of them profess to ascribe to the Roman Catholic faith. A second large group of Latinos and Latinas see themselves as spiritual people but maintain a level of suspicion of traditional faith groups such as the Roman Catholic and Evangelical movements.<sup>16</sup>

For the purposes of this study, the couples involved comprise part of that “less than 20%” that do attend church regularly. Furthermore, these churches are all evangelical Protestant churches, and therefore do not ascribe to Roman Catholic beliefs. Faith and religion are very much at play in the context of this project. As these couples already rely on their churches to fulfill at least part of their communal and social needs, the question becomes how *much* is the church relied upon with regards to couples counseling in crisis and couple’s enrichment?

For the Bible-believing, faith professing Hispanic Christian, faith and spirituality are inseparable from daily life. However, it begs the question; how much of this dependence on faith is internal and how much is communal? When it comes to dealing with marriage crisis or enrichment do Hispanics rely on their individual faith and prayer to be their only means of looking to the church for help? “Many Latinas/os have an acceptance of their circumstances that come directly from their faith traditions.”<sup>17</sup> There is an unspoken adherence to the concept of *aguantar* (to put up with). Oftentimes, among Latinos/as putting up with the hardships of family life and marriage is just part of being a faithful

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<sup>16</sup> Smith and Montilla, 33-34.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia Arredondo, 58.

Christian. Life experience has proven that hardships are an eventuality, and keeping a tight lid on those hardships has proven to be the standard *modus operandi*.

In the context of cultural considerations, spirituality comes into play simultaneously with the aforementioned aspects of family organization and dependence. These forces combined provide a solid and complex base for counseling from an outsider. One final layer to add to this is the immigrant experience.

### 3. The Immigrant Experience

Reviewing literature for this project has overwhelmingly emphasized these Hispanic cultural considerations of family organization, dependence, and spirituality. This final consideration dealing with the immigrant experience is no exception. It is an unfortunate, but natural fact that all Hispanics at one point or another will mostly likely encounter racism, prejudice, and other forms of oppression due to their *"immigration status"* (supposed or actual). "Latinos are commonly stereotyped as recent immigrant (usually illegal), criminal, violent, unskilled, and guilty of taking jobs away from Americans."<sup>18</sup> As a result, many Latinos suffer from acculturative stress, whether born in the United States or not, solely based on their different appearance.

Arredondo affirms that Hispanics suffer from a racism in a variety of ways including being racially profiled, being blamed for the poor economy, and being the victims of a rise in hate crimes against Latinos according to the Southern Poverty Law Center in 2011.<sup>19</sup> These factors have contributed to an extremely high level of acculturative stress. Arredondo defines this as a scenario where a person's "sense of identity, competence, and self-efficacy is challenged."<sup>20</sup> Acculturative stress plays a large role

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18 Arredondo, 108.

19 Arredondo, 108.

20 Arredondo, 110.

in family dynamics as a couple's resilience is put to the test as they each battle these stressors as individuals as well as jointly.

Interestingly, there is a phenomenon called the "immigrant paradox" that claims that foreign-born immigrants have better overall physical and mental health than U.S. born Latinos.

The longer second-generation members live here and the higher their acculturation to American society in terms of language, citizenship, and self-identification, the more they suffer from medical problems, including depression and drug and alcohol abuse. This phenomenon...is most likely due to the fact that migration exposes immigrants and their children born here to poverty, exclusion, and discrimination – all of which create stress and risk for health issues.<sup>21</sup>

The physical and emotional ramifications of acculturative stress and racism are powerful cultural considerations to keep in mind. As couples marry, their acculturative stress levels may differ from one another due to their immigration status (first generation, second generation, etc.)

An interesting connection may be made between one's immigration status and one's proclivity to seek out pastoral counseling at the church. As the project progresses, close attention will be paid to any trending data along these lines. Another question for consideration is the immigration status of the pastor. Does the immigration status of the pastor seem to have any effect on whether or not counseling services are even offered? Furthermore, does any similarity or difference in immigration status among the married couple themselves have any effect on their measured sense of marital happiness? Looking at these questions and trends as we consider the effect of the immigration experience on the Hispanic couple will provide helpful data towards understanding how to better serve their emotional and spiritual needs.

#### Two Church Counseling Considerations

Among the literature that deals with counseling Latino populations in the church there emerged two themes that will be addressed here: 1. The Pastor AND the Church as Healing Agents, and 2. The

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<sup>21</sup> Arredondo, 150.



Equal Importance of Marriage Counseling AND Enrichment. There is a limited amount of research done on pastoral counseling in the Hispanic context. Building off of the cultural considerations, both of these themes described here rely heavily on the value of community and mutual interest. These values are very prevalent among Hispanics. It naturally stands to reason that the Church considerations would flow out of these values as well. By looking at each of these considerations individually, one will be able to get a fuller picture of the literature that exists in relation to this topic. In addition, some questions for further study will emerge out of this review as well.

### Consideration 1: The Pastor and the Church as Healing Agent

Historically, the pastor of a church carried the responsibility of her ministry. It was a one-person show where the pastor embodied all aspects of spiritual leadership and guidance. The modern church has come a long way in allowing for elders, deacons, and an array of ministry leaders that now help carry the load. Literature shows that there is a great amount of emphasis now put on the church as a whole instead of just the pastor.

The New Testament word *laos*, from which “laity” is derived, refers to all Christians! The “ministry of reconciliation” (described in II Corinthians 5:17) was entrusted to the whole church, not to a set-apart professional ministry. What, then, is the function of the clergy? We are, by our training and ordinance, equipped and designated to function as leaders, trainers, and specialists in that which is the work of every Christian...Pastoral care, rightly understood is a function of the entire congregation.<sup>22</sup>

Clinebell so perfectly explains the interwoven nature of the family of believers and how we are designed to function as a whole unit. This theory is supported by Scripture as we are reminded that the

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<sup>22</sup> Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 394-395.

church body is made up of many parts, each playing an integral role in the overall wellness of the entire body. We are created to rejoice and suffer together equally. (1 Cor 12:1-26) With respect to couples counseling, this is no different.

It is an unfortunate tendency in churches that ministry to couples in crisis is often seen as a pastoral responsibility when the members of the church have so much to offer with regards to support. As church members support one another through prayer, accountability, fellowship, and biblical reflection, they allow God to use them in effective ministry on a daily basis.

A church as a family of families (of many types) is an unrivaled and strategic position to become a family wellness center...The family is a social organism, or system...Whatever effects one part of the family organism automatically effects all parts, just as an infected, injured, or well-functioning hand influences the entire body.<sup>23</sup>

Although pastoral care has become a ministry of the entire church family, when it comes to pastoral counseling and addressing the emotional and mental needs of the hurting in the congregation, do Hispanic churches still overwhelmingly point to the pastor? Part of the project design will be to investigate this very question.

#### Consideration 2: The Equal Importance of Marriage Counseling AND Enrichment

As this project looks more thoroughly into the types of couple's ministries that do or do not exist in the Hispanic churches in the St. Louis area, these things will be taken into consideration. Not only up for debate is *who* should provide counseling (the family or the church, or both), but Clinebell argues that marriage enrichment is just as important a need as marriage crisis counseling. Furthermore, when

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<sup>23</sup> Clinebell, 283.

churches provide enrichment services, the probability that couples will seek out crisis counseling from that same church increases.

As couples readily engage in enrichment programs such as seminars, retreats, couple's bible studies, etc., they are continually strengthening their knowledge base for healthy communication, love and respect of their partner. Readily providing services like these that are specifically geared towards enriching couples will do just that; enrich their marriage quality and longevity. This, in turn, will provide a great leg forward if, and more likely when, crisis hits.

Such program should have two thrusts – a *pastoral care-education* dimension consisting of a variety of attractive marriage enrichment and family strengthening events (including classes, workshops, retreats, and camps); and a *pastoral counseling* dimension consisting of growth-centered marriage and family counseling for those going through periods of storm and stress. Each of these thrusts can undergird and complement the other. A marriage enrichment program will enable some couples needing marital counseling or therapy to seek this help sooner.<sup>24</sup>

Because of cultural elements, like *personalismo* mentioned earlier, Hispanics are accustomed to not bringing up personal issues in the church. It is very possible that congregants do not feel a need for marriage enrichment due to their high level of ignoring personal issues from public view. It is furthermore possible, that as a result, Hispanic churches have not done much to provide such services. Conversely, it is possible that congregants *do* feel a great need for these services, but are not likely to ask for them. The results will depend on the region. An interesting point to note is the fact that marriage enrichment falls very low on the radar for Latino regardless of the region.

Satisfaction in marriage was and may still be seen as the result of good fortune and, to some extent, wise choices. The notion of “working” toward “marital improvement” or enrichment seems somehow culturally shallow for Latinos, based as it is on an optimistic ethos about life in general. Furthermore, an investment in maintaining marital harmony values children and family life over individual happiness and autonomy.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 247.

<sup>25</sup> Falicov, 328.

This is an amazing phenomenon because it can be both selfless and destructive at the same time. On the one hand, focusing on the family and on children above all else is admirable. On the other hand, marital happiness and fulfillment may be suffering as a result of a one-sided focus. It leaves little room for the blessings between man and wife that are intended when the two become one flesh.

This project will measure how Hispanic congregants rank their priorities with regards to private matters. It will be interesting to see what correlation exists between defined priorities and measured marital satisfaction. This project hopes to illuminate the desires of couples in question, and how they coincide with the services that the churches provide. It may also prove helpful to investigate what, if anything, pastors are doing to encourage couples to focus on their marital success in addition to their parental success.

Often times, marital issues are ignored or suppressed. They can go unattended so long that once crisis hits it feels like there is no turning back. Churches that actively care for their married congregants through marriage enrichment are ushering the couple towards healthy marriage systems.

Churches should have some kind of structure in place to support married couples during their entire marriage walk (pre-marriage, marriage enrichment, and crisis management). How this looks can take on many faces. The important aspect is that the church is functioning as a healing body and is providing services, regardless of what they call them (couples bible study, retreats, counseling, seminars, etc) that uplift the couple. Clinebell has a checklist to assess unmet needs in the church with regards to marital enrichment and family programs.<sup>26</sup> This project will utilize this assessment with the pastors of the church as an organized way to assess what programs already exist in the church. It will also serve to identify what areas may need programming.

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<sup>26</sup> Clinebell, 55.

## Conclusion

As we look at how evangelical Protestant Hispanic churches are approaching the task of pastoral counseling in the St. Louis region, an extensive literature review has helped drive the direction of the project. Understanding that there are significant cultural factors as well as significant church ministry factors in conversation with one another provides a holistic view of the things that should be addressed in Hispanic counseling ministry. From the literature review, the following questions below have been extracted for further investigation.

1. Is counseling a necessity in the Hispanic church if *familismo* is so strong?
2. If not, why? Is it because the needs ARE being met by these cultural considerations? It is because the needs are being ignored? Both?
3. Do Hispanics see pastoral counselors as the answer to that need?
4. How much is the church expected to address crisis and enrichment issues among couples?
5. How can a pastoral counselor participate in being part of "*la familia*" while still maintaining appropriate professional counselor-counselee boundaries?
5. What are the felt needs of the congregations? Are the churches addressing these needs?
6. How does *marianismo*, or the shying away from *marianismo* effect marital relations?
7. Is there any correlation between less traditional families (with regards to machismo and *marianismo*) and openness to counseling?
8. How much dependence on faith is internal vs. communal?
9. Does immigrant status influence one's proclivity to seek out pastoral counseling one way or the other?
10. Does the immigration status of the pastor seem to have any effect on whether or not counseling services are even offered?
11. Does any similarity or difference in immigration status among the married couple themselves have any effect on their measured sense of marital happiness?
12. What are the top identified priorities in Hispanics?
13. Do pastors see marital success as a priority in the church above parental success? What are they doing to help encourage congregants one way or the other?

In order to tackle these questions, the program design of this study must incorporate the opinions of the church pastors and congregants in question. This project attempts to address these questions both through an extensive literature review as well as a church surveys completed by the congregants themselves. A thoughtful program design will inform how best to acquire this information.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PROGRAM DESIGN

The program design for this project intends to locate Hispanic churches in the St. Louis region and poll the opinions of the congregants with regards to Pastoral Couples Counseling ministry in their respective churches. This requires a three-step process: 1) Create Purpose Letter & Church Surveys, 2) Locate Local Churches, 3) Visit Churches and Complete Surveys. Of course, the final step in the process will be the survey analysis, which will be covered in the next chapter. It is important to remember that Hispanic culture and ministry functions, in many ways, very differently than Western cultures. Although a very organized and clear approach must be taken in attaining this program data, a strong understanding of *personalismo* must be maintained when completing the program design. In other words, relationship and flexibility must be established early on in the program design.

*Personalismo* represents an orientation where the person is always more important than the task at hand, including the time factor... (Interaction requires) the practice of personal warmth and genuineness in interpersonal relationships.<sup>1</sup>

This portion of the project cannot be expected to be achieved quickly without making relationships and results suffers. As such, the program admits, just as Rivera stated above, an emphasis of relationships over the research goal itself.

#### Step One: Create Purpose Letter & Church Surveys

The first step of creating the church surveys requires careful thought. Hispanics in the United States, particularly those who are Spanish-speaking immigrants, tend to have a warranted distrust of

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<sup>1</sup> Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, Patricia Arredondo, and Maritza Gallardo-Cooper, *Counseling Latinos and La Familia: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 112.

surveys and divulging personal information. This is particularly true when the purpose of the surveys is not made clear.

For recent and undocumented immigrants, be it that they have migrated voluntarily or involuntarily, there exists a constant internal conflict that presents one of the biggest challenges of this process. The cause of this conflict is the fear of possible deportation to their countries of origin, and the emotional and legal consequences of that deportation. This fear comes up in the informal and formal conversations between congregations and their religious leaders.<sup>2</sup>

Hispanics fear misuse of information, deportation, or other legal actions when asked too many questions about their personal life. Knowing this, the purpose of the surveys must be made just as clear and straightforward as the actual questions in the survey. For this reason, the first step must include creating a purpose statement/letter to ease any distrust on the part of the pastor/church representative.

Understanding that Hispanics may be monolingual or bilingual also informs this study. All material must be readily available in both Spanish and English. It is important not to make assumptions about which language would be preferred simply based on the fact that these are Hispanic churches. Not only may these churches offer English or Bilingual services, but each individual person's language preference should be respected and acknowledged. A great deal of insecurity and even negativity may develop if there is no cultural sensitivity to language acquisition and preference.

...many second and third-generation Latinos prefer Spanish for social and informal interactions and prefer English for work and formal interactions. Also, language preference is associated with generational status, education, and place of residence in the United States. Many of these contextual variables are directly related to acculturation. Other factors that affect language preference center on psychological barriers such as (a) anxiety, (b) fears, and (c) defense mechanisms. (Furthermore, Latinos) ...may prefer to speak English rather than Spanish because

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<sup>2</sup> Rebecca Radillo, *Cuidado Pastoral: Ministerio con inmigrantes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 12. (Translation Mine)

they fear discrimination (or may be) ...interjecting inadvertently a defeated sense of Latino identity and denial of Latino self.<sup>3</sup>

Readily providing Purpose Letters and Surveys in both Spanish and English will enforce no assumptions and encourage personal preference. Language choice can be an incredibly sensitive topic. Since the project design heavily relies on personal opinion through surveys, it is helpful to avoid any unnecessary discomfort by offending one's sense of language preference.

This letter is mainly designed to be read by the pastoral team and/or designated representative of the church who will be the primary means of contact with the given congregation. As such, it is designed as a means of introduction to the program designer as well as the project. The letter must include a brief summary of educational background and current degree program, an explanation of *how* the research will be used, and an invitation to join in strengthening Hispanic ministry in St. Louis by participating in this survey.

Since there has not been to date any extensive study of Hispanic churches in the St. Louis region, nor even a database of the churches that exists, participation in this study will help get a pulse of Hispanic counseling ministry. Once surveys have been completed, results will highlight strengths in the Hispanic community as well as suggestions for expanding the services provided based on survey feedback. As such, pastors and congregants need to clearly understand the value of their participation.

Furthermore, this letter must clearly convey the various options for completing surveys so that each congregation may choose the style that best fits his/her church needs.

Although direct communication with the pastor will be the preferred method of interaction, this letter provides a written explanation of the project and a clear point of reference for the pastor when and if the

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<sup>3</sup> Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, Patricia Arredondo, and Maritza Gallardo-Cooper, *Counseling Latinos and La Familia: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 123.



church chooses to participate in the study. In instances where the pastor/church representative does not have time or desire to sit and speak at length, the letter will serve as a clear reminder of the project. A copy of the letter is available in Appendix A.

In such a relational culture it must be expected that *some* churches may never even look at the letter or request more information. In these instances, building a basis for the project design will be completely verbal. It is important to not shy away from this style of communication, as it engages the Hispanic community in a more culturally relevant way. “With Latinos in particular, a lack of *personalismo* and *respeto* may be perceived if the clinician places more attention on completing paperwork than getting to know the client through *la charla* or *la platica*.”<sup>4</sup> Although author Arredondo here is talking about clinical assessments and paperwork, the same concept applies to administering surveys (paperwork as it were) to congregations. Hispanics greatly value relationship and a sense of genuine fellowship over written paperwork and formal questionnaires. This is another way in which this project must remain its flexible and open nature to allow for organic conversation and openness to surveys.

Whether conveyed through the letter or through direct communication, it is important to include various options for the churches to complete the surveys in the way that best suits their preference and needs. Again, at this point, more importance is given to *how* this research is approached than the actual data itself. Flexible/relational ministry is key. The options detailed in the letter will give each church the choice of having the project introduced by the project designer, or by a pastor or church designated spokesperson. Through conversation each pastor will determine if they want the project designer to 1) guest preach 2) give short testimony 3) do a church-wide announcement, or 4) allow pastor/church

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<sup>4</sup> Patricia Arredondo, et al, *Culturally Responsive Counseling with Latinas/os* (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 2014) 155.

representative to be the face of the project. This will determine the means by which the project itself will be introduced to the church.

With regards to execution of the surveys, the pastor will also be given the option of 1) completing the surveys that same day in person, 2) scheduling a return visit for completing surveys on site, or 3) church representative distributing church surveys at their convenience and setting up a future pick up date with program designer. Giving a variety of options in the program design letter will allow pastors and churches to function in a way that is flexible and convenient for them.

Once the purpose letter has been established, the survey itself must be compiled. Just as was the case with the letter, the surveys will have an English and a Spanish version to maintain sensitivity to language preferences. Since surveys are most successful when they are brief and clear, this survey will be a short, multiple-choice survey that allows for consistency with answers and ease of completion as well as analysis. With regards to formal counseling for Latinos, authors Guarnaccia and Rodriguez affirm the following criteria be followed.

They noted that it is critical to assess the following during the first visit: (a) language proficiency, literacy, and language preferences; (b) social connections (family structure and social supports); (c) migration experiences; (d) religious beliefs and practices; and (e) health care preferences and utilization patterns (healing practices, health utilization experiences, help seeking tendencies).<sup>5</sup>

Although this criterion was intended as guidelines for initial clinical visits, these suggestions helped inform the critical criteria to be included in the program surveys. The criteria developed from these suggestions include the following: (a) language preference; (b) civil status; (c) citizenship; (d) church ministries; (e) help seeking preferences. The survey is a brief 2-sided questionnaire consisting of 17 multiple choice questions, 2 ranking questions, and 1 open-ended question allowing for any additional comments to be made.

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<sup>5</sup> P.J. Guarnaccia, and O. Rodriguez. (1996). Concepts of culture and their role in the development of culturally competent mental health services. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 18, 419-443.

The survey questions are broken down into 6 personal/biographical questions, 10 questions identifying the awareness and/or utilization of counseling ministries at church, 3 opinion questions, and 1 open-ended question for additional comments. A full survey can be found in Appendix B.

### Step Two: Locate Local Churches

Once a program design letter and survey have been completed, the next step is to locate the local churches where these surveys will be distributed. Surprisingly, this is most likely the most complicated (or most labor intensive) of the four steps of this project design. A common problem among immigrant churches is their lack of publicity. Some of this may be contributed to lack of funds and connectedness to the western abundance of social media and advertising. However, other reasons may include a distrust of North American government politics, and a desire to stay off the radar for fear of discrimination. "...their struggle to enter the country and to obtain validity, they are at risk of victimization, exploitation, oppression, and marginalization."<sup>6</sup>

Immigrant churches often develop as a support system for a particular cultural group. As such, they are not as interested in extensive church growth outside of their own population, and advertisement becomes less necessary as publicity is achieved through relationship and word of mouth. Although the majority of the churches in this study function as immigrant churches (being comprised of mainly Hispanic immigrant families), no data will be collected to verify if these churches prefer to be called immigrant churches. For the purposes of this project, 'immigrant churches' will be used as a term to describe the Hispanic churches in this study, all of which (according to survey data) are majorly comprised of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries.

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<sup>6</sup> Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, Patricia Arredondo, and Maritza Gallardo-Cooper, *Counseling Latinos and La Familia: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 96.

There is no Hispanic church directory for St. Louis, and the majority of the Evangelical Protestant Hispanic churches in the St. Louis region are not found online. For this reason, one of the outcomes of this project design will be to include a Hispanic Church Directory of St. Louis (Appendix C). It is important to note that these are only the churches that fit within the scope of this project, and as such, do not include non-Protestant faiths (Catholic, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.).

Since creating this directory will be one of the program goals for this project, there must be in-depth church search by other means than online. This will greatly rely on investigating and connecting with the community directly. There are three main strategies engaged in assisting this research: 1) Online Search, 2) Hispanic Pastors Alliance, 3) Local Groceries and Businesses.

A good place to start is with online research. Although the findings are very limited compared to the actual number of Hispanic Churches found in the region, an online search does provide a good starting point. A list of churches found online is compiled, and these churches will be the first to be approached for participation in the study. It must be assumed that some of the information found by means of the internet may be incorrect or outdated. The nature of this project must assume perseverance and an 'ear to the ground' as you engage with the community to locate churches.

As a relationship is built with the churches that were successfully looked up online, the project designer will ask for any the pastors of these churches for any assistance in locating other Hispanic churches in the region. This type of informal inquiry taps into the more relational side of ministry and as such, will take more time. It should be understood that sometimes the best information found will be by relational means, and not through the internet or church databases.

Once the online listed churches have been located, a list will be compiled of any names of churches that were given by the pastors. Admittedly, information received may be fragmented; pastors or church representatives may only know the name of a pastor, a vague location of a church, the name

of an English congregation where there may or may not be a Hispanic church meeting etc. Locating these churches may require driving around and inquiring about their location.

Another great resource to tap into are any organizations that have Hispanic pastors and church leaders doing ministry. Luckily, such an organization exists in St. Louis that will further aid in locating local churches. In St. Louis there is a small organization called *La Alianza de Iglesias y Ministerios Cristianos Hispanos de San Luis*. (Hispanic Pastoral Alliance for Churches and Christian Ministries of Saint Louis). The program designer will visit this organization, seek out membership, and maintain a working relationship with La Alianza to locate churches, network with pastors, and include willing participants in the program study. This step will involve a long-term fellowship with the organization that goes beyond the scope of this project.

As with the churches that were found online, the Alianza will be a second step to locating other Hispanic churches in the area. As the majority of the Alianza participants are pastors of Hispanic congregations, this step will connect the project with many churches that may not have appeared online.

Lastly, the third and final approach to locating local Hispanic churches will be to go directly to the restaurants, grocery stores, and business that service Latinos/as. As much of the population is relational, talking to business owners and asking about Hispanic churches in the neighborhood will provide good insight into possible church locations. They may not only be aware of Hispanic churches, but may very well be members of the congregation themselves. As with the previous methods mentioned, all information must be taken with a grain of salt. Immigrant Hispanic churches can be very transient and inconsistent. It is possible that a Hispanic congregation that met inside an English-speaking church for years, has moved, whose whereabouts are unknown, or even no longer exists.

On the more favorable side, local businesses may be able to provide correct and up-to-date information of existing churches. This reflects the connectedness of the Hispanic and immigrant community. Seeking out these churches requires a great deal of investigating with the ear to the ground.

### Step Three: Visit Churches & Administer Surveys

The final step of the project design involves physically connecting with the churches and administering the surveys if permitted. Visiting the churches and speaking with the pastor or church representative involves the following steps; introduction of self and program, the formal “ask” to participate in the project, and the execution of surveys. Above all else, a sense of *personalismo* must be maintained. “More than anything, this form of talk eases and engages clients in conversation they can relate to from a perspective of familiarity.”<sup>7</sup> The project designer must be both formal and courteous, demonstrating a respect for the church authority as well as personable and friendly, demonstrating an approachability and familiarity with the Hispanic way of engaging. To this end, the project designer will introduce self and purpose of visit by means of conversation and will provide the church with a purpose letter and sample survey. It is at this point that the church’s discretion will dictate *if* and *when* the project will be welcomed.

Given that the majority of the Hispanic churches found will be through relationship and word of mouth, it is safe to say that, in many cases, phone numbers and emails may not be readily available means of communication. For churches that cannot be reached to make an appointment (which will be the majority of the churches) it is recommended to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to service time in hopes of meeting the pastor/church representative. In this project, no appointments were made ahead

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<sup>7</sup> Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, Patricia Arredondo, and Maritza Gallardo-Cooper, *Counseling Latinos and La Familia: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 116.

of time over the phone, but rather through in person introductions. Face-to-face interactions go a long way among Hispanics, and engage the flexible and laid-back values that allow for organic relationships.

For us time is to be used to further and enjoy our sense of community. It is more important to wait for everyone to be present than to start a meeting exactly on time. It is more important to listen to everybody and to take time to dwell on the personal than to end a meeting on time.<sup>8</sup>

Since the Hispanic culture is highly relational, it will be important not to rush the agenda of the project, but rather, to get to know each congregation by means of participating in worship service and an openness to multiple visits. Engaging in *personalismo* will demonstrate a genuine respect and appreciation for the relationship being fostered over the actual completion of the surveys. Visiting each church may take only one visit or many. Maintaining an openness to the pace and preferences of each congregation will go a long way in creating relationships and likeliness to participate in surveys.

Once the purpose is clearly communicated, the church will be asked if they wish to participate. In cases where the church declines participation, it is vital that the project designer excessively thank the church for their time and attention to the request. When possible, the project designer should still stay and participate in the church worship service and stay for fellowship. If an invitation to participate in the surveys is declined, followed by an abrupt departure of the project designer, the genuine nature of the 'ask', and the concept of *respeto* and *personalismo* suffer greatly. It leaves an impression that the only interest in the church was for research purposes over relational purposes, which goes harshly against Hispanic values.

In cases where the churches agree to participate in the study, the pastor will be given the choices mentioned in Step One which involve choosing *who* will administer the survey to the church, and *how* it will be administered (same-day, return visit, etc.) Once this is determined, the program

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<sup>8</sup> Allan Figueroa Deck and Yolanda Tarango, *Perspectivas: Hispanic Ministry* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 26.

designer's level of involvement will depend on each church's preference. Being present during surveys is ideal as questions may arise that need clarification. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that all congregants are comfortable with the format of multiple-choice questions, ranking questions, or even reading or writing in Spanish or English. "...poor language proficiency or illiteracy may be a language barrier. Some may not be able to complete routine forms properly...many Latinos may readily comply and sign consent forms they do not understand."<sup>9</sup> Some participants may ask for help reading/completing the surveys, and even ask for their answers to be circled for them. Cultural sensitivity to these preferences is critical, and every effort should be made to assist joyfully and at a patient pace to avoid offending the participant.

As much as possible, being physically present for the distribution and completion of the surveys is preferable. Although, every effort to cater to each church's preferred method will be taken, it is assumed that being present for questions and assistance is the best way to avoid incomplete surveys, or confusion about the questions. For those churches that opt to complete their surveys on their own time, quality assurance measures cannot be taken, and the data may suffer. The best data possible will be taken from these surveys, and those questions that may not be completed correctly (specifically with regards to the ranking questions) will be left out of the overall data analysis.

The project design of this study should go a long way in providing some very helpful information on the state of counseling services in Hispanic Churches in the St. Louis region. In the next chapter, the survey data will be analyzed and will provide a starting point from which to grow counseling ministries among Hispanics in Saint Louis churches.

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<sup>9</sup> Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, Patricia Arredondo, and Maritza Gallardo-Cooper, *Counseling Latinos and La Familia: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 117.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### PROJECT ANALYSIS

Once all the data from the project design is collected, the final task in completing this study will be to thoroughly analyze the outcome. This is step four of the program design. Beyond simply analyzing the data collected, this final chapter will also explore ministry suggestions for strengthening the existing counseling services at Hispanic churches as well as providing steps for how to create programs where counseling services may be lacking. As such, the project analysis will be divided into three sections: 1) provide a detailed summary of the outcomes of each step of the program design, 2) analyze the survey data collected, and 3) provide ministry suggestions for improving and/or creating couples counseling services among Hispanic churches. To gain a better understanding of the success of the program design, we will first look at how each step of the program design was received.

#### Program Design Analysis

##### Step One Analysis: Purpose Letter and Church Surveys

Overwhelmingly, the purpose letter seemed to be appreciated, but mostly unnecessary. Although it was important to create a purpose letter to better inform churches of the purpose and scope of the project, this was effectively communicated without a letter. The majority of the churches that were approached (18) either did not choose to keep the letter, or made a decision about participating without having read it. This further confirms the concept of *personalismo* that puts a greater amount of weight on personal interaction, first impressions, and relational values rather than hashing out details. For the remainder of churches that *did* either read or request the purpose letter, a decision was not made without also orally reviewing the project design.

Good research protocol suggests a written purpose statement or vision statement as a necessary step in project design. In this case, a clear ability to verbally explain the purpose of the project was preferred over an actual written letter. Nevertheless, a purpose letter is still recommended as it did serve those few churches that did refer to it. A good rule of thumb is to still provide such a letter, but to maintain cultural sensitivity and flexibility when met with disinterest in the letter itself. It proved most helpful in this project as a reference point for the program designer to be able to effectively communicate the importance of the project and the need for church involvement.

Step one did not only involve creating a purpose letter, but also creating the physical surveys for distribution. As mentioned in chapter four, the surveys were created in both Spanish and English for the convenience of the congregation. The Spanish surveys were preferred over the English surveys in every instance except where a non-Hispanic church member was present. Out of all the churches surveyed, only a few English surveys were requested, and 100% of those went to White-American members whose primary language was English. Although there were various levels of Spanish proficiency (some spoke with medium to high fluency and some little to no Spanish at all), all participants preferred the surveys to be administered in their dominant language.

Informal research was done via conversation to further investigate why those members that spoke little or no Spanish chose to attend a Spanish-speaking service. In all cases, English-speaking participants were attending due to association with another member that was bilingual. In one instance, this was a married couple where the husband was a Hispanic, Spanish-dominant, bilingual pastor and the wife was a White-American non-Spanish speaking member. It is important to note here that although all Hispanic participants preferred Spanish surveys, this does not reflect how many of them also spoke English as a second language. The biographical data, including language preferences, taken from the surveys will be further detailed in the survey analysis section of this chapter.

## Step Two Analysis: Locate Local Churches

Locating Hispanic churches in the greater St. Louis area was not a straightforward step to this project. As mentioned earlier, a church directory does not exist, and many of the churches are not found by means of a general online search. A thorough list of churches will require various methods of investigation. This section of the analysis will outline which churches were located and by what means they were found.

Although, admittedly, not effective in and of itself, a good jumping point was a general online search. Much information that *is* available online was fragmented or outdated, but some headway was made in starting to compile a church list by these means. Some key words for the online search included “Hispanic churches in Saint Louis”, “Latino ministries in Saint Louis”, “Iglesias Hispanas en San Luis,” “ministerio hispano en San Luis”. English and Spanish search engines were used for this research. Only 4 of the churches approached for this project were found by means of this online search.

Although it is important to note that almost 14 of the churches *do exist* in some fashion online, they do not appear unless prior knowledge exists to specifically search by name. This leaves 2 churches that have no online presence at all. Since prior knowledge did not exist, this further proves the need for other methods of investigation. Many of the Hispanic churches that *do* exist online have Facebook pages in lieu of an official website. Other are imbedded underneath the Latino/Hispanic ministries section of their English-speaking counterpart. And an even smaller amount *does* have their own website that is not imbedded under another church, but are not publicized enough to find without knowing the actual name of the church to search. This is often a result of churches that are so small that they do not find it cost-effective enough to pay web providers the extra fees for the churches to appear in a general online search.

Having found only a handful of Hispanic churches in the St. Louis area via internet search, other methods needed to be employed. As mentioned in the program design, another vital resource for connecting with Hispanic churches was by networking with the Alianza de Iglesias y Ministerios Cristianos. For the purposes of this paper, all future references to this organization will simply be called “La Alianza”. My connection with La Alianza started as a general inquiry and an opportunity to share my project with the Hispanic churches in membership. As previously stated in the program design, the desire was to build a long-lasting relationship with La Alianza beyond the scope of this project. As a Hispanic leader engaged in ministry in St. Louis, I sought out and attained membership status with La Alianza to keep abreast of Hispanic ministry in the city. It will be important to maintain these ministry connections as well as my membership status with La Alianza in order to facilitate this network.

Almost half of the churches included in this study, 8 were found as a direct result of connecting with La Alianza. La Alianza began in 2011 as a means of support for local Hispanic churches. It is comprised of various pastors and elders from the greater St. Louis area. Connecting with La Alianza played a vital and indispensable role in furthering this study. When first approached, there were five members of La Alianza, representing 4 Hispanic churches. In the last two years, La Alianza has grown to see as many as fifteen pastors and elders, representing 10 different churches in membership or regular attendance with La Alianza. La Alianza has also welcomed visiting pastors and leaders from outside of St. Louis and, in some cases, from other Hispanic countries, to participate in joint church ventures. The purpose has been and continues to be to build the effectiveness of our ministry as Hispanic pastors and leaders and to maintain a working relationship with one another as we network and serve together.

Another informal, but vital method of inquiry in locating other Hispanic churches was by means of talking with the community. *Bodegas/Mercados* (grocery stores) are an easy way to connect with any existent Hispanic populations. Approximately 14% of the churches surveyed were found by talking with local grocery store owners in the neighborhood. As a very social culture, it would often become a store-

wide conversation about where churches used to exist, might exist, or definitely exist among the clients in the store. Some information was outdated, but as mentioned, at least 3 churches were successfully discovered strictly through grocery store owners.

Another approximately 2 churches were found by happenstance. Driving through various neighborhoods, I came across a few unexpected church signs advertising Spanish church services. Although in some instances, the service times or contact numbers were incorrect, this was another successful method of locating more churches.

Probably the most difficult church to locate was found by a combination of all of these resources. It was first discovered online, but once visited; it was found to no longer be meeting in the location indicated online. Speaking with the current English-speaking congregation at that location, they were uncertain where the church had moved to, but they were fairly convinced the church *did* still exist nearby. According to the English congregation, the reason for leaving was that they changed denominations and were no longer affiliated with the English congregation at that location. Unsure of how to locate this church, I then drove around in hopes of finding a church sign, or local Hispanic businesses. I happened across a short strip mall that had a Hispanic butcher and grocery store, and a taqueria (taco restaurant) all in one. Once I inquired within, they helped me locate the Hispanic church that had moved, and it was just down the street from the strip mall, less than one mile away from its previous location.

It became clear to see that locating Hispanic churches in the St. Louis area was no easy task. Access to accurate church information is inconsistent and often outdated. As a direct result of this extensive research, a Protestant Hispanic Church Directory has been created to better serve the Hispanic community of St. Louis and to better connect these churches with one another. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this directory can be found in Appendix C. Once all churches were located, they

needed to be approached for participation in the study. Next, we will look at the outcome of the petition for participation.

### Step Three Analysis: Visiting Churches and Administering Surveys

A total of 20 Hispanic churches were approached for participation in this study. Of those churches, 3 of them remain unfound. These churches may no longer exist, or their new church locations are still unknown. Another 2 churches approached denied participation in this study. As a result of this approach, this project represents 15 Hispanic churches in the greater St. Louis area that agreed to participate in the study. For a complete list of the names of all churches approached and a breakdown of their level of participation in this project, see Appendix D. As previously mentioned, the task of asking churches to partner with this project takes time and patience.

In very few instances the church surveys were accepted and completed the same day as the initial inquiry. This only occurred with 2 of the churches, and should not be surprising as this was the primary introduction. The remainder of the churches, as expected, required more visits beyond the initial inquiry. In an effort to build a positive relationship and trust, only over half of the remaining churches (7) required 2 or more visits beyond first hearing of the project. It was important to maintain *personalismo* by not demanding urgency throughout this process.

Part of the reason for multiple return visits is also attributed to a pastor or church official forgetting that a return date had been scheduled, resulting in surveys that were not yet ready for pickup. It was important to not take offense to these moments of forgetfulness as the focus must remain on the building of relationship rather than the completion of the task. In these instances, it was still appropriate and welcomed to stay for the church service and enjoy fellowship even if the surveys were not ready. And, when possible, I would stay and attend service and fellowship with members after

service. This prioritizing relationships over the actual project goes a long way in understanding the various churches beyond the scope of the survey questions themselves.

Upon administering the surveys, it was immediately evident in some cases that a few further barriers existed. The first barrier was language literacy. Even though surveys were provided in English and Spanish, this did not address the issue of literacy itself. For those who were not comfortable reading in their dominant language, it proved helpful to be present to help complete the surveys. On more than one occasion I was asked not only to read out loud each question to the participant, but to physically mark down each designated answer for them as well. This is one of many reasons why being *present* for the actual administering the surveys is preferable to leaving them at the church. If anyone who took the survey did experience literacy issues, it would be safe to assume that they either did not complete the survey accurately, or completely, if at all. That being said, an overwhelming number of churches (10 of the 15) opted to administer the surveys themselves at an appointed time, and have them ready for collection upon my next visit

A second barrier was time. Some churches chose to allow their participants to take the surveys home with them and return them at their convenience before a given date. As the data clearly shows, 12 of the 15 churches had a survey completion rate of 50% or less. In other words, most churches had less than half of their congregation submit survey responses. Much of this could have been avoided if the surveys were completed on site. It appears that the more time a church was given to complete the surveys on their own, the lower completion rate percentage. Higher completion rates were achieved by the churches that *did* choose to complete the surveys while still at church.

A third, and final barrier to retrieving high survey completion rates is attributed to confusion and/or an unfamiliarity with certain types of survey questions. In a couple of instances, when I asked if a

participant wanted help to complete a question, they *For* example, two survey questions involve ranking personal preference from most important to least important. See the exact survey questions below.

**17. In your opinion, please rank the following counseling resources in order of MOST important (1) to LEAST important (4)**

\_\_\_\_\_ Family

\_\_\_\_\_ Friends

\_\_\_\_\_ Church

\_\_\_\_\_ Work

**18. In your opinion, please rank the following ministries in order of MOST important (1) to LEAST important (5) to you.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Worship Ministry

\_\_\_\_\_ Children’s Ministry

\_\_\_\_\_ Bible Study

\_\_\_\_\_ Marriage Counseling

\_\_\_\_\_ Family Counseling

Figure 1. Opinion Excerpt from Survey Questions

There appeared to be confusion over what was expected in the responses. Some participants wrote (1) in each blank. It is possible that participants were identifying all options as important versus not important. Others simply chose one answer by marking (1) and left the remaining options blank. And still others answered in various other ways. Many theories can be drawn by these responses as to *why* participants answered in this manner. But, the most important deduction from this is that questions need to be clearly explained and possibly even modeled. Furthermore, being present while members take the survey can help ensure any misunderstandings are cleared up. In these instances, a courteous apology was made for not being clearer in giving instructions, and help was made, when



possible, to correctly answer the ranking question. This was done to help maintain *la dignidad* (dignity) of the survey participants.

A humble approach allows for *dignidad* to be maintained. *Dignidad* refers to the idea that authority and correction is done in a non-combative way that fosters personal integrity and pride. It is critical that those who have agreed to take the survey do not feel inadequate or belittled for making a mistake on the survey. As a visitor to the church, it is further important that an apology be made as a way of embracing more direct communication styles.

Latinos may find direct communication methods rude or insensitive. To ensure rapport, present sensitive issues with an apology or recognition that the message could be interpreted as strong or offensive...Con todo respeto le tengo que informar que... (With all due respect, I have to inform you that...)<sup>1</sup>

This excerpt specifically is expressing advice to counselors with regards to bringing up sensitive information that may be deeply personal and/or difficult to discuss. However, the same concept applies when addressing someone in less personal matters. In the context of this study, there is still little to no rapport built between the program designer and the member(s) taking the survey. For this reason, a respectful sense of humility will foster *dignidad* and *personalismo*. Since surveys were anonymous, only those surveys that were submitted directly to me could be briefly reviewed for accuracy. When possible, surveys were returned ‘con todo respeto’, as participants were asked to adjust their responses accordingly.

Still, in other cases, some surveys were only partially filled out. For example, 10 of the 227 surveys submitted only had responses for one side of the survey. As this was a 2-sided survey it may be that participants did not notice a second side, or for whatever reason, chose not to complete it. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, Patricia Arredondo, and Maritza Gallardo-Cooper, *Counseling Latinos and La Familia: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 116.

another example where explanation could have been clearer, and even, a physical statement written on the form indicating that the survey continued on the back, might have improved completion rate. For the purposes of this study, only answers that were correctly and completely filled out initially, or upon correction, could be included in the data analysis.

### Survey Data Analysis

The actual data collected from these surveys can be broken up into three categories for analysis. These include biographical data, counseling questions, and values measurement. Analyzing this data will help identify the various members of the congregations as well as assess their understanding of counseling services present at their respective congregations. This data will further identify each respective person's measured values on various ministries of the church which will directly inform what kinds of counseling ministries may be needed.

### Biographical Data

Analyzing the biographical data of survey participants better informs the context in which the surveys were given. These areas include language preference, citizenship, church membership, and marital status. This data will also allow us to see any data trends that exist between marital status and knowledge of and/or use of counseling services available. Firstly, we will look at language. Let's look back at the two questions from the survey regarding language preference.

The survey questions were number 6 and number 14 noted below. Although these two questions did not appear sequentially in the survey, they are included here below for easy reference. For a complete list of survey questions, see Appendix B.

<b>6. What languages are spoken at home? (please select all that apply)</b>		
Spanish	English	Other: _____
 <b>14. If you answered YES to question #13 , was this counseling service in Spanish or English? (IF you answered NO to question #13, move to question #17</b>		
Spanish	English	Prefer not to answer

Figure 2. Biographical Excerpt from Survey Questions

The majority of survey participants were Spanish-speaking members of their respective congregations. A reported 157 of those represented in the surveys claimed Spanish as their dominant language. This means that although 70 claim a language other than Spanish as their dominant language, surveys were overwhelmingly requested in Spanish. This suggests a fair number of bilingual participants who maintain a strong enough fluency in two languages to attend a Spanish-only worship service while still classifying their dominant language at home to be English or other. Of that 70 surveys that did not select Spanish as their dominant language, 65 of those claimed English as the language spoken at home, and 5 selected “other”.

Although some of these churches did have English speaking counterparts that offered English-only services, these were separate services with separate pastors and elders that were distinct from the Hispanic churches. In some instances, there was no connection at all between the two services apart from the rental of the church space. The survey did not measure how frequently, if at all, the Spanish-speaking congregations and English-speaking congregations engaged in joint efforts. Only informal data was collected through conversation to reveal that rarely did the two congregations, where applicable, have joint services or engage in fellowship together. Furthermore, only one of the churches

represented in this survey provides a Spanish-only service *as well as* a bilingual Spanish and English service. This church is one of the only instances where the bilingual service is still composed of majority Hispanic members, and there is not an English-only counterpart.

The second question regarding language preference refers to participants who received counseling services *outside* of their church. The question measured which language the counseling was given in. Of these 30 responses, 18 said that counseling services were in Spanish, leaving 9 English and 3 preferring not to answer. Although this survey did not measure if the language for counseling was a result of personal preference or availability, it can be deduced that the majority of participants were willing to receive counseling in Spanish.

Apart from language preference, citizenship was also polled. Approximately 82% (186) of all members surveyed were non-U.S. citizens. This might contribute to the fact that 6 out of the 15 churches approached only returned 25% or less of the surveys. It is possible that many of the immigrant participants have a fear or distrust of data collection regarding language preference and citizenship. This possibility compiled with the fact that many Hispanics do not overwhelmingly seek out counseling services might make a survey of this type seem irrelevant, and possibly not worth taking. Regardless of the reasons for not completing the survey, the best possible data was collected from all of those willing to participate.

How long members are in attendance at a given church also informs how familiar they are with its services. For this reason, it is also helpful to measure knowledge of counseling services at a church against how many years in attendance. Among the churches surveyed, the majority of participants classified themselves as members of the church. Some 180 of participants said they were members of their respective congregations. This survey did not determine how membership at each congregation is attained, so it is fair to assume that some churches may have a membership process while others are may be considered members by consistency of attendance.

This data cannot confirm the actual membership status. It is also possible that some participants might classify themselves as actual members of the church even if membership requirements have not been met. The remaining 47 congregants distinguish themselves as ‘regular attender’ or ‘seldom attender’ in the survey. Among this classification, some 40 participants identified themselves as frequent visitors who are not members. The remaining 7 consider themselves infrequent visitors and nonmembers.

Given that the official church membership cannot be fully substantiated, possibly a better method of measuring consistency and familiarity with a church can be determined by length of time spent at any given congregation. The chart on the next page details how many years the participants have been attending their church.

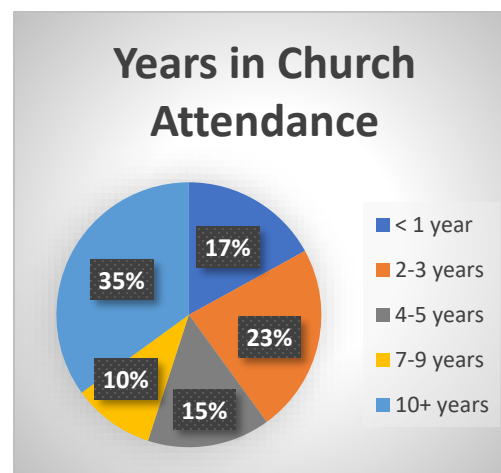


Figure 3. Years in Attendance

The majority of participants (136) claim to be in attendance at their church for four years or more. Of that number, more than half of them claim attendance for ten years or more. Regardless of official membership, this data shows that the majority of those surveyed have strong familiarity with the church through regular attendance. This is helpful as this project attempts to measure both familiarity with *and*

use of counseling services at the participating churches. It is safe to assume that surveys completed by church goers who have been in attendance for more than 5 or even 10 years (official members or not) will yield strong information regarding how well advertised or known counseling services are.

A final biographical data category to measure is marital status. Although this study focuses on the prevalence of couples counseling services available, data was collected from all willing church members, whether married or not. The data shows that 150 of participants were married, leaving 77 as not currently married. Of those who are married, the majority (114 of them) have been married for 10 years or longer. Survey data shows that 3 participants identified themselves as engaged, 9 as divorced, and 6 as widowed, indicating the remaining 59 as single. In these cases, married members may have at one point used any range of counseling services at their church, including pre-marital services, marriage enrichment, or even crisis counseling through divorce. All of these opinions are a valuable resource for this study.

Including non-married members allows data to be more extensive. Furthermore, only assessing knowledge of marriage counseling services by assessing couples is not a fair sampling of data, and does not measure how well churches advertise their ministries to the overall congregation, married or not. Churches should be sure that all members are aware of services provided whether or not they themselves intend to use the service. That way, if a need ever arises for that ministry, the church member already knows how to attain those services either for themselves or for other members in the church.

Below is a summary of the major categories of biographical data taken from the surveys, including citizenship, language preference, marital status and church membership.

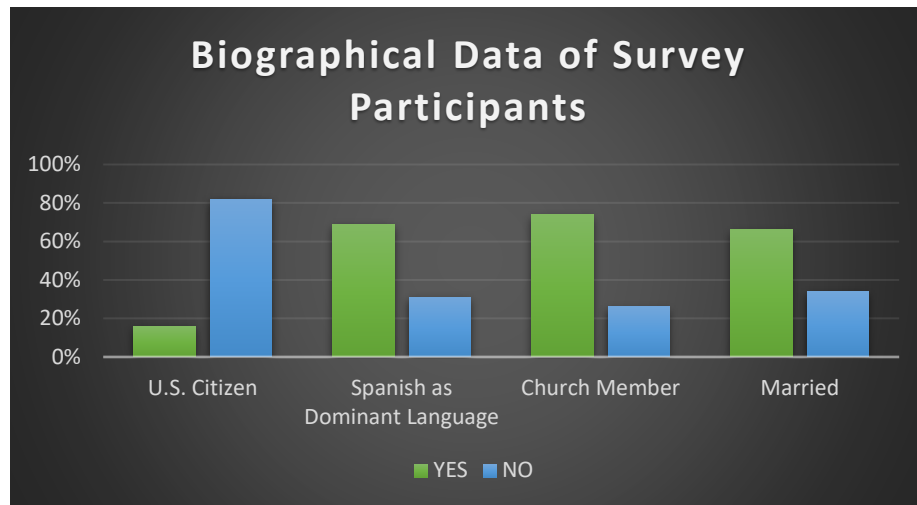


Figure 4. Biographical Data of Survey Participants

The data summary clearly shows that among those surveyed, the majority of the churches are represented by immigrant, Spanish speaking, married church members. Now that we have a clearer picture of *who* the data is coming from, it is important to analyze the data with regards to counseling services. The next step of the survey analysis will include an in-depth review of the opinion and use of counseling services in the church.

#### Counseling Services

In this survey, exactly half of the 20 questions were directly related to counseling services inside and outside of the church. Of these 10 questions, 4 of them surveyed the use of counseling services outside of the church, while the remaining questions dealt with services provided within the church. These survey questions aim to assess the measured importance of, knowledge of, and use of counseling services within the various congregations.

According to survey results, when asked how important couples counseling services were in the church, an almost unanimous response of 209 participants who answered this question classified their

answer as ‘very important’ in contrast to the remaining 9 that classified their response as “somewhat important” or “not important.” Only one respondent who selected “not important” chose to add a written response stating “irrelevante”, meaning irrelevant. This response, though interesting due to its direct contradiction to the theological basis for counseling and care in the church, does not represent the majority of responses in any way. Nor can it be identified as to *why* this participant feels this way since there was nothing further written. It is included here so that this report represents the most thorough inclusion and analysis possible of all information retrieved.

It is interesting to note that although almost 100% of participants agree on this point, and the majority of these participants are married, that only 130 of respondents can confirm if their churches even have pre-marital or marriage counseling services available. That means that almost half of the congregations are either aware that their churches *do not* have counseling services, or are uncertain of said services existing. As mentioned in the previous section, these results are coming from church members that have familiarity with their churches through consistent attendance over many years. It is obvious that not all of these churches are providing sufficient information or access to counseling services if the majority of members in attendance for years cannot identify if these services even exist.

An alarming 143 of surveyed participants claim that they have never used counseling services at their church despite how important they identify these services to be. It is possible that although counseling services, specifically *in* the church, are deemed very important by the majority of participants, these services may have the distinction among Latinos as being specifically for the purposes of ‘crisis counseling’. As mentioned in previous chapters there may also be a stigma attached to counseling that prevents Latinos from taking advantage of such services, preferring counseling from *la familia*. There is no way from this data to determine *why* counseling services are overwhelmingly classified as very important and yet, only used in underwhelming numbers.



Below details the survey participants' knowledge of the various counseling ministries available at their church. It is important to note that although participants believe their answers to be true, this data is not measured against actual services present at any given church and cannot be a true report of actual services available.

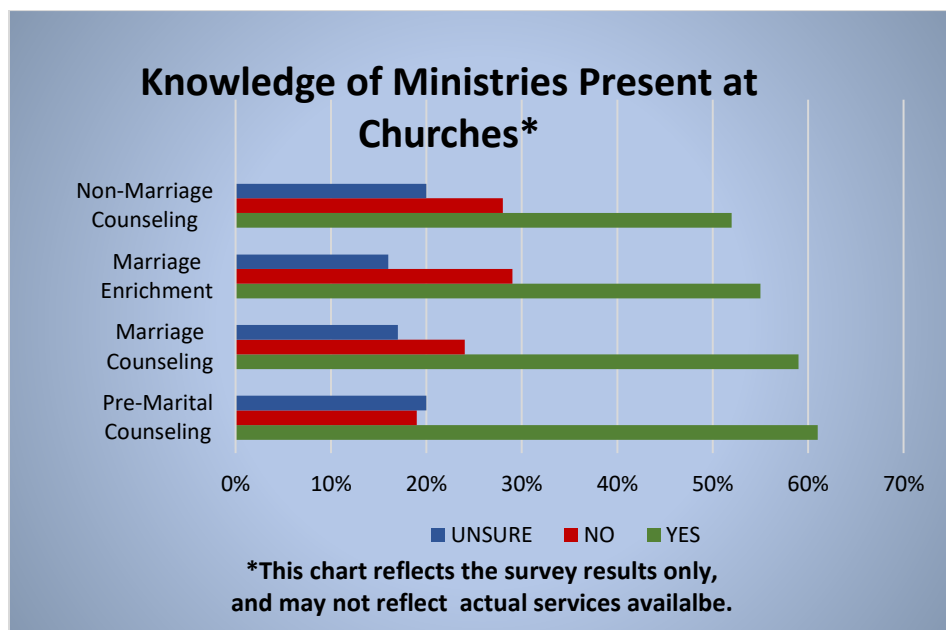


Figure 5. Knowledge of Church Ministries

Between 113-136 of surveyed participants seem confident that their church has one or more types of counseling services available. For those that did not answer yes, their responses are relatively split between “no” and “unsure”, having a small margin of difference. Counseling services were categorized in the following ways: non-marriage counseling, marriage enrichment, marriage counseling, and pre-marital counseling. In each one of these categories the majority of survey participants affirmed the existence of these services in their churches. That is contrasted with approximately 20-30% affirming that their churches *do not* have these services. It is clear that somewhere the data does not reflect the actual presence of these services. This disparity further affirms the need for the various

churches to be clearer about what they offer. So far this data analysis has reviewed biographical data of survey participants and counseling services present. The final category for analysis is values measurement.

### Values Measurement

In this portion of the data analysis, the survey attempted to measure participant opinion by means of two ranking questions. The first of these two questions asked participants to rank the church ministries in order of most important to least important. Ministry categories included marriage counseling, family counseling, bible study, children's ministry, and worship ministry. The chart below shows the results of ranking these categories from most important to least important.



Figure 6. Ranking of Church Ministries

An obvious and overwhelming majority of participants (130) ranked bible study as the most important of the ministries listed. In order of ranking, the results show the following most popular order: 1. Bible study, 2. Marriage Counseling, 3. Children's Ministry, 4. Family Counseling, and 5. Worship. In some of the categories, there were really different rankings. For example, among the 217 surveys that answered this question, Children's Ministry was ranked first for 50 responses, second for 46 responses, third for 39 responses, fourth for 56 responses, and fifth for 26 responses. That shows a pretty even discrepancy between where people value children's ministry.

However, two categories had more disparate rankings; bible study and worship. Bible study ranked most clearly at 130 responses for first place, with the remaining values spread out for second to fifth place. This shows that those who *did not* rank bible study as the first and most important ministry were spread pretty evenly between the other rankings. However, worship was the one category where there was the greatest discrepancy between most and least important. Whereas 65 of surveyed participants ranked worship as the most important ministry of the church, a competitive 80 ranked worship as the fifth and least important ministry of the church. This is the greatest disparity seen among the opinions polled here.

As mentioned earlier, although both marriage counseling and family counseling rank pretty high in values measurement, it is still an underused resource according to data collected. The second values question had to do with ranking counseling resources. In other words, participants were asked to rank who they would go to first if they needed counseling between family, friends, church, and work. The chart details the results of these ranking questions.



Figure 7. Ranking of Counseling Resources

The top rankings for the categories were in the following order: family, church, work, and friends, (the last two of which were ranked very closely to one another). It is clear from the data collected that family is considered the greatest resource when seeking advice or counseling. Approximately 150 of surveyed participants ranked family as the first resource while the remaining percentages were between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place. Ironically, not one participant labeled family as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important resource. This is not surprising that family would far surpass the other categories as a primary resource, particularly when considering the importance of *familismo*. The categories of friends and church were relatively spread out as well.

Of all the categories, work had the greatest disparity. Work was almost tied for first and second place with 18 and 17 responses respectively. Furthermore, work was almost tied again at third and fourth place with 92 and 90 responses respectively. If there is anything to take away from this data it is the fact that family plays an integral role in providing counseling and advice to church members who are in need. Since the surveys did not poll what *type* of work each participant did, it is unclear to tell whether or not this disparity about work was related to type of profession. For example, it would be

easy to believe that someone who work in a ministry/church context may rank work relationships as a valuable resource for counseling. Conversely, someone who works in a non-ministry profession may not consider work colleagues as a primary resource for these services. As there is no way to measure the correspondence between profession and likelihood to rank work as a counseling resource, one can only guess the factors that make this disparity possible.

One thing that is clear from this data is the fact that family and church are the top two resources for counseling. As mentioned earlier, even though this is the case, a great number of participants admit not using counseling services at the church. This brings us back to the initial purpose of this research. Data is meant to inform how well Hispanic churches in the St. Louis area are approaching couple's pastoral counseling. It further attempts to measure how much of a felt need these services are among Hispanics in conjunction with how important these services are biblically. Before we can move on to the final conclusions and ministry proposals for this project, there is one area of data left to mention.

#### Excluded Data

There was a small percentage of data that could not be calculated in the overall analysis. Although the majority of surveys were completed thoroughly, there were a few exceptions to this. For the purposes of this data analysis, and for the purposes of the most accurate measure of opinion, these surveys were excluded from the overall data calculations. This only represents a total of 2 surveys. In this instance, less than 5 scattered questions were answered throughout the survey. It was assumed that there was either little interest, or some measure of confusion as to what was being asked. Although few questions did have responses, this data was excluded from the overall report due to inconsistency.

In few other instances, some individual questions were excluded from the overall data analysis. In some cases, particularly with the ranking questions, these answers were not filled out correctly. However, in these instances, only individual questions had errors while the rest of the survey was

completed correctly. As such, individual questions were removed from the overall data analysis, and calculations were adjusted accordingly to represent accurate percentages.

This survey analysis provides the first collected data on counseling services in Hispanic churches in the St. Louis area. Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of research that exists in general for Latino populations.

There is a paucity of available research with Latino populations. Available results of outcome research – particularly that related to Latino populations – remain small...the critical need for additional research is only exacerbated by the almost universal call that therapeutic interventions be conducted and, if needed, adjusted according the culturally relevant dictates of the population for which they are meant to serve...(many reviews over the decades) have illustrated convincingly that counseling and psychotherapy is effective...(but they have not addressed) culturally specific approaches to treatment efficacy. Consequently, the existing efficacy research has proven to have very little localized impact on the practice and theoretical frameworks underlying current work with Latino populations.<sup>2</sup>

As the data for this project design is analyzed, it is important to remember that these findings cannot be interpreted apart from the context in which the data was retrieved. For this reason, it was so important to spend so much time firstly laying the groundwork for *familismo*, *personalismo*, and *machismo*. Furthermore, it was important to touch on the issues of spirituality and the immigration experience. As this data has been compiled, careful attention was taken to not draw conclusions that were based on issues irrelevant to Latino populations.

### Ministry Analysis

Now that the program design analysis and the data analysis have been completed, the third and final step is the ministry analysis and suggestions. Since this project did not measure actual ministries present at the participating churches, it would not be fair to assess these churches as to how well they

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<sup>2</sup> Robert L. Smith R. Esteban Montilla, *Counseling and Family Therapy with Latino Populations: Strategies that Work* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 209-210.

are or are not providing services. However, data analysis did clearly show that congregants' knowledge of counseling services varied greatly among participants. This does indicate that, while services may be present, these churches may need to do a better job of clearly advertising these services.

Apart from knowledge of services, a second conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis is the fact that services are not used as much as they should be. Earlier in chapter 2, a case was made for establishing the theological basis for pastoral counseling as an important and necessary aspect of caring for couples in the church. Furthermore, it was determined that the church plays an integral role in providing a much-needed service as it provides a 'counseling family' to members.

Religion or spirituality is an integral part of the nature and cultural identity of the Hispanic community...There is no doubt that the church is the social institution that has the capacity to contribute extensively to the emotional, spiritual and physical health...the educational aspect that the communities of faith can offer is part of the integral pastoral care that backs and supports this community and that, at times, serves as a link with the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects that the church offers. This central function of pastoral care permits that people can become aware of the internal strength that they possess and that they can achieve new goals and positive accomplishments in the society in which they develop.<sup>3</sup>

Although many surveyed participants agreed with the importance of biblical counseling for couples, the results showed that only 84 have used counseling services at the church. This was despite the fact that 209 surveyed participants classified these services as very important. Counseling services in Hispanic churches in the St. Louis area are not being utilized to the fullest by its own congregants.

Keeping the cultural context in mind, a third conclusion that I propose is that these churches could benefit from lay training counselors. It must be noted here that it is possible some of these churches *do* have counseling programs, lay training programs, etc. However, since this survey did not measure the scope of these ministries, but rather the use and preference of said ministries, the ministry proposal will be a general suggestion for all participating churches. As previously mentioned, whether

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<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Radillo, *Cuidado Pastoral: Ministerio con inmigrantes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 51. (Translation Mine)

these churches have services or not, they are greatly underused. It is possible that this is due to a cultural stigma against counseling, or a strong sense of *familismo* and *personalismo* that values relationship and family over counseling services. This is something that could be deduced from the survey analysis as well.

Since Hispanic churches value personal relationships that are built over time, and have a foundation of trust, lay training programs should tap into this value. Churches should seek to train lay leaders to be stand-in counselors and pastoral caregivers. Hispanic churches specifically could benefit from training lay leaders to be the first resource church members go to. The survey results already showed that Hispanics consider family and church to be the top two resources for counseling services. However, that same majority also claimed to rarely use those services. If there were a program that made counseling more normative, and relational, it just might encourage members to feel more inclined to actively partake of these services.

Firstly, churches must advertise and openly advocate for these services in their church. This should happen both from the pulpit (in the form of sermons and prayers), as well as in the ministries of the church (in the form of lay leaders, retreats, prayer ministry, etc.). Clinebell suggests that although this type of holistic approach is biblical and vital, there is also a place for specific leaders to facilitate this growth.<sup>4</sup> Clinebell goes on to express the value of including the whole church in pastoral care. If this were happening on a large scale for the surveyed churches, the percentage of people who were *aware* of these services would most likely increase. Furthermore, it is hopeful that the percentage of people *using* these services would also increase. The value of utilizing the entire church body to care for the entire church body connect well with Hispanics who already have a strong sense of *familismo*.

As the 'pastorhood of all believers' (Hiltner) becomes a reality in a congregation, laypersons escape from their 'spectatoritis' and begin to fulfill their personal ministries...When dedicated

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4 Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 401.



laypersons become informal pastors to their neighbors, associates, and fellow church members, *they become the church* – the body of Christ serving those in need.<sup>5</sup>

As lay leaders are training in pastoral care and counseling, not only do counseling services become more known, but they also become more normative. The stigmas lose their strength when members see an entire body embracing such services as simply a part of their church culture.

Couples particularly need to embrace such services and care for their marriage in all stages of the married life. The success and strength of any marriage, and of any family with children depends on the spiritual health of the couple, and the ability to prioritize marriage as primary ministry. Clinebell assigns 4 steps to a successful marriage and family program that includes developing a family ministry committee, assessing and prioritizing the needs of the couple, devising a plan to meet unmet needs, and actually implementing the plan.

As couples realize that pre-marital counseling, marriage enrichment, family counseling, and crisis counseling are all normal stages of a marriage that need attention equally, and that their respective churches readily provide such counseling through a complex network of clergy and lay leadership, they will be more likely to use it, and lasting spiritual growth will result. It is particularly helpful when churches embrace lay leadership as a core *function* of the church rather than a *lesser* ministry.

Some parishioners feel that they are getting second-class help from amateurs, when a lay persona calls on them. Both pastors and congregations need to learn that training lay carers is not a pastor's way of passing the buck but a powerful way of deepening, broadening, and sharing the ministry of caring with the whole congregation. It does not replace pastoral care by a pastor, but rather complements and greatly augments it.<sup>6</sup>

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5 Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 398.

6 Clinebell, 397

Clinebell continues on to express the importance of “quality” lay care as a valid concern among pastors. For this reason, a detailed lay training program that is biblically based and specifically laid out is helpful in assuring all lay leaders are on the same page as far as counseling approach for various issues. Much work still needs to be done in Hispanic churches to educate members of counseling services, and to encourage couples to use these services to enrich their marriages and better equip them to serve God, each other, their families, and their churches. Moving forward, it will be important to develop this kind of marriage enrichment program for Hispanic Protestant churches in St. Louis that is bilingual and lay-led and recognizes the value of the church as *una familia*. This project serves only as an initial stepping stone for the great work that lies ahead for counseling ministries in Hispanic churches.

Before starting this project there was no active list of Hispanic churches in the Saint Louis area. As previously mentioned, the Latino evangelical church presence was relatively hidden from public view, even among the congregations themselves. As a direct result of this study, St. Louis has its first working directory of every Hispanic evangelical church in the Greater St. Louis area. This is monumental towards getting the Latino church voice and presence known in St. Louis.

Furthermore, as a result of visiting these churches, many of the pastors have expressed interest in meeting each other’s churches and developing stronger networks. Conversations with surveyed pastors also indicates that the development of this directory has opened their eyes to the need for more publicly making their churches accessible to prospective church members and families who may be seeking a church community.

I have personally become a member of La Alianza that has strengthened my relationship with local pastoral and ministry leaders and has allowed us to partake in joint programs as well. Lastly, church members have taken a more active interest in their church ministries as the surveys sparked curiosity of some members to investigate what services their church offers.

Overall, this study serves as the first of what I hope will be many projects that seek to uncover the rich Hispanic church ministry in St. Louis. Making other churches aware of their Hispanic neighbors in Christ provides an avenue by which these churches may enhance the effectiveness of their ministries through counseling services, partnerships, prayer, and fellowship. As the Hispanic population of St. Louis continues to grow, my hope is that awareness of their churches and ministries grows with it, all to the glory of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## APPENDIX A

### INVITATION LETTER

El 1 El 1 de enero, 2017

Hermanos y Hermanas en Cristo,

¡Bendiciones! Es con mucha alegría que les escribo hoy. Para los que no me conocen, me llamo Diana Bantu. Yo soy una ministra en la Iglesia de la Comunidad Jubileo y soy parte de la Alianza de Iglesias y Ministerios Cristianos Hispanos de San Luis. Estoy escribiéndoles para pedir su participación en ayudarme terminar con mi tesis doctoral.

Estoy estudiando en el programa de Liderazgo Pastoral del Seminario de Gordon-Conwell. El objetivo de este programa es preparar mujeres y hombres para el ministerio que comprenden la cultura postmoderna en la cual vivimos y que tomen en serio el reto de presentar la verdad del evangelio con eficacia y con el poder de Dios. Esta meta se realizará en el transcurso de tres énfasis durante los tres años de estudios: el pastor como predicador, el pastor como líder, y el pastor como consejero.

Mi tesis específicamente tiene enfoque en el último énfasis: el pastor como consejero (proveedor de cuidado pastoral). Estoy haciendo un estudio de la importancia de consejería pastoral en las Iglesias Hispanas en la región de San Luis.

**Si me permiten, yo puedo presentarme y dar un breve resumen de 5-10 minutos de mi programa doctoral después de lo cual voy a entregar las encuestas. La encuesta es anónima, y se compone de 20 preguntas de opción múltiple, y no tomará mucho más que cinco minutos para completar. En total, el proceso no pasará 15 minutos.**

Su ayuda como iglesia sería muy apreciada y sería una valiosa contribución a mi estudio doctoral. Al terminar mi tesis, tendré un amplio resumen de consejería pastoral en las Iglesias Hispanas de San Luis, junto con las metas que podemos usar para aumentar nuestra efectividad de ministerio como pastores.

Gracias por su consideración. ¡Que Dios les bendiga ricamente!

Diana Bantu  
314-809-0171  
Diana.bantu@gmail.com

APPENDIX B

ENGLISH SURVEY QUESTIONS

Please fill out the following survey and return to your church office, OR mail to:  
4231 N. Grand, St. Louis, MO 63107 Attention: Diana Bantu

**1. State your marital status:**

Single              Engaged              Married              Divorced              Widowed

**2. Were you born in the United States?**

Yes                      No

**3. If married, how long have you been married?**

Less than 1 year              2-5 years              6-10 years              10-20 years              20-30 years              30+ years

**4. State your membership status in the church: (select all that apply)**

Member              Regular Attender              Seldom Attender              Clergy              Staff              Elder

**5. How long have you been attending this church?**

Less than 1 year              2-3 years              4-6 years              7-9 years              More than 10 years

**6. What languages are spoken at home? (please select all that apply)**

Spanish              English              Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. How important is couples counseling services in the church to you?**

Very Important              Somewhat Important              Not Important

**8. To your knowledge, does your church have pre-marital counseling services?**

Yes                      No                      Unsure

**9. To your knowledge, does your church have marriage counseling services?**

Yes                      No                      Unsure

**10. To your knowledge, does your church have marriage enrichment services? (couples retreats, couples seminars, couples bible studies, married men/women's cell groups)**

Yes                      No                      Unsure

**11. To your knowledge, does your church have counseling services for issues other than marriage?**

Yes                      No                      Unsure

**12. Have you ever used counseling services at your church?**

Yes                      No                      Prefer not to answer

**13. Have you ever used counseling services outside of the church?**

Yes                      No                      Prefer not to answer

**14. If you answered YES to question #13 , was this counseling service in Spanish or English?  
(If you answered NO to question #13, move to question #17**

Spanish                      English                      Prefer not to answer

**15. To you knowledge, what was the race of the person providing counseling? (circle all that apply)**

Hispanic              White              Black              Other              Unsure              Prefer not to answer

**16. Was this counseling service for marital issues?**

Yes                      No                      Prefer not to answer

**17. In your opinion, please rank the following counseling resources in order of MOST important (1) to LEAST important (4)**

\_\_\_\_\_ Family

\_\_\_\_\_ Friends

\_\_\_\_\_ Church

\_\_\_\_\_ Work

**18. In your opinion, please rank the following ministries in order of MOST important (1) to LEAST important (5) to you.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Worship Ministry

\_\_\_\_\_ Children's Ministry

\_\_\_\_\_ Bible Study

\_\_\_\_\_ Marriage Counseling

\_\_\_\_\_ Family Counseling

**19. If you needed marital advice today, who would you be more likely to seek advice from?**

Family              Friend              Church              Counseling Agency              None

**20. Would you like to add any further comments?**

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## SPANISH SURVEY QUESTIONS

Por favor complete la encuesta y volver a la oficina de su iglesia, o por correo a:  
4231 N. Grand Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63107

### 1. Indicar su estado civil:

Soltero      Comprometido      Casado      Divorciado      Viudo

### 2. ¿Nació en los Estados Unidos?

Sí      No      Prefiero no contestar

### 3. Si casado, ¿cuánto tiempo ha estado casado?

Menos de 1 año      2-5 años      6-10 años      10-20 años      20-30 años      30+ años

### 4. Indicar su estado de membresía en la iglesia. (se puede seleccionar más de una selección si se aplica)

Miembro      Visitante frecuente      Visitante Infrecuente      Clero      Empleado      Anciano

### 5. ¿Cuánto tiempo ha estado asistiendo a esta iglesia?

Menos de 1 año      2-3 años      4-6 años      7-9 años      10+ años

### 6. ¿Qué idiomas hablan en casa? (se puede seleccionar más de una selección si se aplica)

Español      Inglés      Otros(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 7. En su opinión, ¿qué tan importante es el servicio de consejería para las parejas en la iglesia?

Muy importante      Un poco importante      No importante      Irrelevante

### 8. ¿A su conocimiento, su iglesia tiene servicios de consejería prematrimonial?

Sí      No      Inseguro

### 9. ¿A su conocimiento, su iglesia tiene servicios de matrimonio?

Sí      No      Inseguro

### 10. ¿A su conocimiento, su iglesia tiene servicios del enriquecimiento de matrimonio? (retiros de parejas, seminarios, estudios de la biblia para parejas o para hombres/mujeres casados)

Sí      No      Inseguro

### 11. A su conocimiento, su iglesia tiene servicios de consejería para temas que no tratan del matrimonio? (crisis familiar, depresión, guía espiritual, ec)

Sí      No      Inseguro

**12. ¿Alguna vez ha utilizado los servicios de consejería a su iglesia?**

Sí                      No                      Prefiero no contestar

**13. ¿Alguna vez ha utilizado los servicios de consejería fuera de su iglesia?**

Sí                      No                      Prefiero no contestar

**14. Si ha respondido afirmativamente a la pregunta 13, fue este servicio de consejería en español o inglés? (Si ha respondido 'no' a la pregunta 13, pasa a la pregunta 17)**

Sí                      No                      Prefiero no contestar

**15. A su conocimiento, ¿Cuál fue la raza de la persona que ofreció la consejería?**

Hispano              Blanco              Negro              Otro              Inseguro              Prefiero no contestar

**16. ¿Fue este servicio para el tema de matrimonio?**

Sí                      No                      Prefiero no contestar

**17. En su opinión, por favor clasifique lo siguiente en orden de más importante (1) a menos importante (4)**

\_\_\_\_\_ Familia

\_\_\_\_\_ Amigos

\_\_\_\_\_ Iglesia

\_\_\_\_\_ Trabajo

**18. En su opinión, por favor clasifique los siguientes ministerios en orden de más importante (1) a menos importante (5)**

\_\_\_\_\_ Ministerio de Alabanza

\_\_\_\_\_ Ministerio para los niños/jóvenes

\_\_\_\_\_ Estudio bíblica

\_\_\_\_\_ Consejería Matrimonial

\_\_\_\_\_ Consejería Familiar

**19. Si necesitaba consejo matrimonial hoy, ¿a quién preguntaría para consejo?**

Familia              Amigo              Iglesia              Agencia de Consejería              Ninguno

**20. ¿Le gustaría añadir algún comentario adicional?**

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## APPENDIX C

### CHURCH DIRECTORY

#### 1. Centro Cristiano Kingshighway

Address: 6704 Fyler Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63139  
(Meets inside Timothy Lutheran Church)  
Phone Number: 314-229-6748  
Pastor(s): Daniel Hernandez  
Service(s): Fridays 6-9pm  
Saturdays 10:30-2:00  
Website: NO  
Facebook: YES  
Email: NO

#### 2. Centro Cristiano Gran Luz

Address: 5904 Forest Blvd.  
East St. Louis, IL 62204  
Phone Number: 618-696-1782  
Pastor(s): Ramon Granados  
Service(s): Sundays 10:30am  
Tuesdays/Thursdays 6:30pm  
Website: NO  
Facebook: YES  
Email: NO

#### 3. Comunidad Cristiana Maranata

Address: 9744 Lackland Road  
St. Louis, MO 63114  
Phone Number: 314-426-2210  
Pastor(s): Edwin Marroquín  
Service(s): Sundays 8:00am-10:00am, 11:15am-1:15pm  
Wednesdays 7:00pm-8:30pm  
Website: [www.ccmaranatastl.com](http://www.ccmaranatastl.com)  
Facebook: YES  
Email: [maranataad@sbcglobal.net](mailto:maranataad@sbcglobal.net)

#### **4. Comunidad Cristiana Vida Abundante**

Address: 1216 Sidney Street  
St. Louis, MO 63104  
Phone Number: 314-532-5051  
Pastor(s): Geury Feliz  
Service(s): Sundays 9am & 11am  
Website: NO  
Facebook: YES  
Email: vidaabundantestl@gmail.com

#### **5. Confraternidad Nueva Ciudad San Luis**

Address: 1483 82<sup>nd</sup> Street  
University City, MO 63132  
(Meets inside New City Fellowship Church)  
Phone Number: 314-605-3652  
Pastor(s): Jim Ward  
Service(s): Sundays 11:00am  
Website: www.newcity.org  
Facebook: YES  
Email: jward@ncfstl.org

#### **6. El Redentor**

Address: 7567 St. Charles Rock Road  
St. Louis, MO 63133  
Phone Number: 646-643-2792  
Pastor(s): Yaner Marty  
Service(s): Sundays  
Website: NO  
Facebook: NO  
Email: NO

#### **7. Iglesia Bautista Agape**

Address: 3108 Fairmont Ave.  
Collinsville, IL 62234  
Phone Number: 678-414-2110  
Pastor(s): Rafael Valter  
Service(s): Sundays 11:30am-1:00 pm  
Website: www.iglesiabautistaagape.org  
Facebook: YES  
Email: NO

### **8. Iglesia Bautista El Faro St. Ann**

Address: 3025 North Lindbergh Blvd.  
St. Ann, MO 63074  
Phone Number: 314-423-9370  
Pastor(s): Unlisted  
Service(s): Sundays 10am-12pm  
Website: [www.iglesia-bautista-el-faro.business.site](http://www.iglesia-bautista-el-faro.business.site)  
Facebook: YES  
Email: [hispanicfbctl@gmail.com](mailto:hispanicfbctl@gmail.com)

### **9. Iglesia Cristiana New Heights**

Address: 12455 Natural Bridge Road  
Bridgeton, MO 63044  
Phone Number: 314-438-7051  
Pastor(s): Unlisted  
Service(s): Sundays 10:30am  
Website: [www.newheightsstl.com](http://www.newheightsstl.com)  
Facebook: YES  
Email: [Secretary@NewHeightsSTL.com](mailto:Secretary@NewHeightsSTL.com)

### **10. Iglesia Emmanuel de Ballwin**

Address: 82 Henry Ave.  
Ellisville, MO 63011  
(Meets inside West County Bible Church)  
Phone Number: 314-657-8299  
Pastor(s): Cuauhtémoc Avila  
Service(s): Sundays 1:00pm  
Website: NO  
Facebook: NO  
Email: NO

### **11. Iglesia Hispana Vida Nueva**

Address: 11570 Mark Twain Ln.  
Bridgeton, MO 63044  
Phone Number: 314-267-1139  
Pastor(s): Ponciana & Ana Grajeda  
Service(s): Sundays 6:00pm  
Website: NO  
Facebook: YES  
Email: NO

### **12. Iglesia Metodista Unida La Trinidad (Bridgeton)**

Address: 5275 South Lindbergh  
St. Louis, MO 63126  
Phone Number: 314-922-0040  
Pastor(s): Marino Chacon  
Service(s): Sundays 12:30pm  
Website: www.laTrinidadUMC.com  
Facebook: YES  
Email: metodistas\_es@yahoo.es

### **13. Iglesia Metodista Unida La Trinidad (St. Louis)**

Address: 900 Bellerive Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63111  
Phone Number: 314-353-7879  
Pastor(s): Marino Chacon  
Service(s): Sundays 9:00am  
Website: www.laTrinidadUMC.com  
Facebook: YES  
Email: metodistas\_es@yahoo.es

### **14. Iglesia Summit**

Address: 927 E. Terra Lane  
O'Fallon, MO 63366  
Phone Number: 314-323-1234  
Pastor(s): Alex Rodriguez  
Service(s): Sundays 11:00am  
Website: NO  
Facebook: YES  
Email: alex@thesummitstl.com

### **15. Ministerio Apostólico Plantio del Señor (Iglesia MAPS)**

Address: 1218 Tower Grove Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63110  
Phone Number: 636-575-4651  
Pastor(s): Javier Quintana and Gloelma Quintana  
Service(s): Sundays 11:00am and 6:00pm  
Website: NO  
Facebook: YES  
Email: plantiodelsenor@gmail.com

#### **16. Misión Cristiana Elim-MO**

Address: 9510 Midland Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63114  
Phone Number: 314-429-8855  
Pastor(s): Mario Marroquin  
Service(s): Sundays 11:00am  
Website: www.elim.org.sv  
Facebook: YES  
Email: NO

#### **17. Segunda Iglesia Bautista Maranata**

Address: 2100 Illinois Ave.  
Granite City, IL 62040  
Phone Number: 618-877-4382  
Pastor(s): Marco Sanchez  
Service(s): Sundays 3:45pm  
Website: NO  
Facebook: YES  
Email: NO

#### **Discontinued/Undisclosed Locations\***

\*These churches used to exist and either the current location is no longer known and/or the church no longer exists

#### **18. Primera Iglesia Bautista**

Former Address: 7701 Maryland Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63105

#### **19. Iglesia Pentecostal El Faro**

Former Address: 835 W. Terra Lane  
O'Fallon, MO 63366

#### **20. Iglesia Pentecostal El Faro**

Former Address: 814 S. Woodlawn Ave.  
O'Fallon, MO 63366

# APPENDIX D

## RECORD OF CHURCH PARTICIPATION

List of Churches Approached for Participation in Program Study	Survey Participation			Preferred Method of Delivery			Survey Collection Timeframe				Percentage of Surveys Completed						# of Surveys per Church
	Church No Longer Exists OR Current Location Unknown	Accepted Participation	Denied Participation	Sermon from Project Designer	Announcement from Project Designer	Church Pastor/Elder Announced Project	Completed Same Day	Required 1 Extra Visit	Required 2 Extra Visits	Required 3+ Extra Visits	0% Completed	<10% Completed	10-25% Completed	25-50% Completed	50-75% Completed	> 75% Completed	
Centro Cristiano (Previously CC Kingshighway)			X														0
Centro Cristiano Gran Luz		X			X	X			X					X			12
Comunidad Cristiana Maranata		X				X			X						X		49
Comunidad Cristiana Vida Abundante		X		X						X				X			19
Confraternidad Nueva Ciudad de San Luis		X				X			X							X	10
El Redentor (Previously Iglesia de Dios Viviente)		X				X			X					X			23
Iglesia Bautista Agape		X				X				X			X				4
Iglesia Bautista El Faro Saint Ann		X			X		X								X		23
Iglesia Cristiana New Heights		X				X			X			X					4
Iglesia Emmanuel de Ballwin		X				X		X				X					6
Iglesia Hispana Vida Nueva		X		X				X						X			21
Iglesia Metodista Unida la Trinidad (Bridgeton)		X			X			X			X						0
Iglesia Metodista Unida la Trinidad (St. Louis)		X			X			X			X						0
Iglesia Summit		X			X		X							X			24
Ministerio Apostólico Plantío del Señor		X				X			X				X				14
Misión Cristiana Elim-MO			X														0
Segunda Iglesia Bautista Maranata		X			X				X					X			18
Primera Iglesia Bautista	X																--
Iglesia Pentecostal El Faro	X																--
Iglesia Bautista Pueblo de Dios	X																--
TOTAL NUMBER OF SURVEYS COMPLETED																	227

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## VITA

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